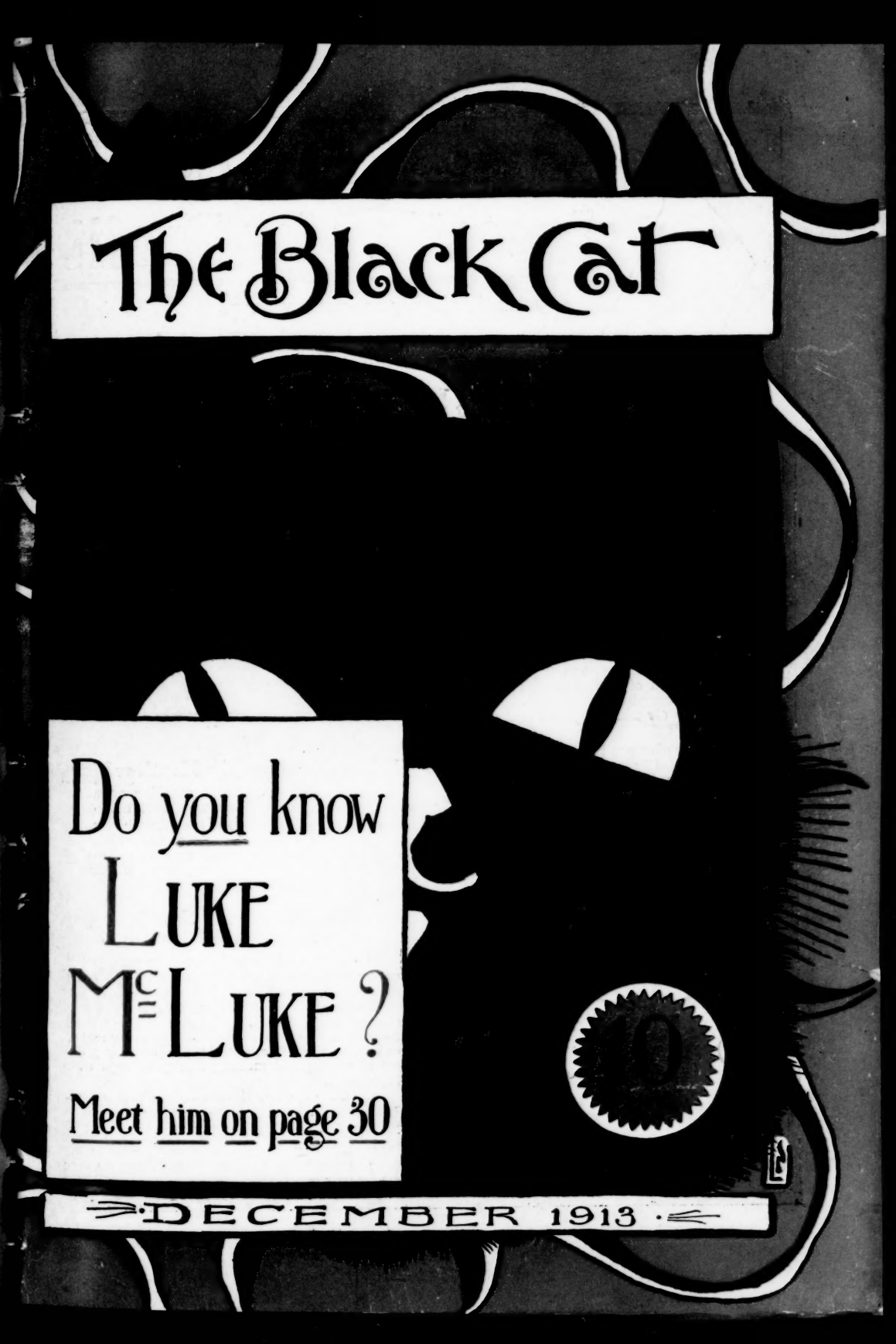
# The Black Cat



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DECEMBER 1913

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# DECEMBER, 1913

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THE BLACK CAT is devoted to original, unusual, fascinating stories—every number is complete in itself. It publishes no serials, translations, borrowings, or stealings. It pays nothing for the name or reputation of a writer, but the highest price on record for *stories that are stories*, and it pays not by length, but by strength. Manuscripts should be addressed to Editorial Dept., The Black Cat, Salem, Mass., and must be accompanied by addressed and stamped envelope for return if unavailable. All MSS. are received and returned at their writers' risk.

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## The Cat Has Come Back

With this issue The Black Cat goes into the hands of new management. We have signalized the event by giving you nine stories in this number( a regular feature to be continued) instead of the usual six stories; by printing them on a better grade of paper and in a new type face. We know you will be pleased with nearly twice as many stories as you have been enjoying and we think our new paper and new type a happy combination of potential virtue and value in a nation where a great majority of its sons and daughters are premature visitors to the oculist. *There will be no increase in price.* We see an unfilled niche in the magazine world for a ten-cent fiction magazine and we hope to make The Black Cat fill it to the point of forcing the Sherman Trust law to beg for mercy.

### *Looking Ahead*

We propose to make The Black Cat a better magazine than it has ever been in its long and honored career. The past to us will be but records and accomplishments to top. We realize we have tackled a man's size job and even at this early stage of our journey we see hard work peeking from around every corner. But we are full of the hope of youth and we like our job, so to the adventure.

It's a good job, too. Where can man better employ himself than helping to make easy the journey of his fellows through this vale of tears? There come to the best of us fretful hours when little blue devils need throttling; when our life-tired brain miserably fails to picture the W. J. Bryan lining to the dark clouds that encompass us. It is then that we yearn to be lifted out of a dull, prosaic existence and be whisked away to the phantom land of blood-tingling adventure and expectant mystery. And if we succeed in our job every number of The Black Cat will be a seven-league pair of boots to make your trip faster. Like the Irishman who explained he drank to drown his sorrows and then drank to celebrate his good fortune we hope to make The Black Cat a care-killer and a joy-celebrater minus the morning-after effects of Pat's potions.

### *Modern Magazine Fiction*

In this day of frenzied-fiction buying the most extravagant prices are being paid for *big name* material. These authors, protected by their contracts calling for recompense on the absurd buying basis of so much per word, turn out stories running from seven to twelve thousand words in length, many of which in our humble opinion could be told better in from three to four thousand words (O. Henry, the master, seldom exceeded five thousand words). And it is you who must pay for this ridiculous vogue. For ten cents we can give you nine good "live" stories free from monotonous descriptions and other tricks of the writing game grouped under the trade name of "padding."

After all, the real merit test of any

magazine with you is not how many stories are in an issue but *how many stories in the issue you read.* It's not how many times a ball player goes to the plate—it's how many times he hits the ball safely that makes his batting percentage.

We plan to give you in every issue of The Black Cat proportionately more good solid reading for ten cents than you will get in the average fifteen cent magazine.

*Something about Writers*

To do all this we must scour the land for good stories, for The Black Cat kind of stories, the type of fiction you have stamped with the approval of your long and loyal patronage. In the pages of The Black Cat the genius of Jack London found its first encouragement. We hope in time new Jack Londons and new O. Henrys will reach their public through the same pages. Speaking of writers, unfortunately many of us err in picturing authors as the caricatures we see in the comic(?) papers. The funny man's conception of a writer is as much a monstrosity as the all too familiar stage Englishman. In all lands and all times the story teller's place has been an honored one and justly so, too. Few of us can recall fonder moments than those spent nose-deep in the wonderland pages of Hans Andersen or the later and more exciting days of Henty, Alger, yes, and those stolen golden moments of Buffalo Bill and the intrepid Jesse James, whose yellow covered adventures were dexterously hidden behind the large pages of the big geography. "To forget" is a world-old cry and where can be found a more natural and more wholesome sedative than the necromancy of the story teller's art? The cruel jest has stung many a sensitive spirit and the fear of ridicule has nearly as often stifled the birth of genius. O. Henry's reply to a proposed lionizing reception, "I am only a poor boy from the country," is an eloquent description of a modest and child-like nature, the kind of spirit that usually accompanies the genius that was his.

*Our Promise to You*

The fetish of big names has never blinded its editorial judgement or dulled its pages. And we promise you there will be no deviation from this rule; no breaking of faith. True, we expect to publish stories by well-known authors but it will be the story, not the author's name, that will win its place in the pages of The Black Cat.

*In short, our policy will be to give you more and better short stories than an exchange of a dime ever produced before, and the kind of stories that for freshness and individuality you can find in no other magazine.*

We believe in the foregoing we have given you a fairly comprehensive idea of what we propose doing. We believe the nine snappy stories in this number bear out in a measure some of these promises.

The jury is out.

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On the editorial page of the Cincinnati Enquirer, daily appears from ten to a dozen choice witty observations on everything in general and nothing in particular under the title heading of "Luke McLuke Says." Luke is J Syme Hastings. Beginning in this number Luke will also contribute monthly to The Black Cat his keen and humorous and often packed-full-of-truth observations. Next to "Mr. Dooley" Luke is the wittiest and wisest brain child of his generation. He is refreshingly original and thoroughly human. He loves life and talks like a man with a good digestion. And a world of people with those two qualities would wipe out war, divorce, and Mexico in ten days. Meet Luke. He's on page 30.

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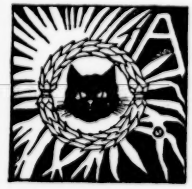
The Black Cat

VOL. XIX DECEMBER, 1913 No 3

# The Flash Within the Tavern

BY ROBERT GARLAND

*Here is a story few magazines would publish. It has no pretty ending. Read it. You will not soon forget Dottye and the cheap tawdry thing she thought was life or the pitiful price the boy, from "back home," paid for her mistake. In less capable hands this effect would have been impossible. We believe Mr. Garland's story is a sincere and compelling life picture; nothing more and nothing else.*



worthless story this.

It ends unhappily. The ventures of mankind are apt to end this way, as anyone with half an eye can see, but stories in magazines seldom do. According to current standards the Almighty would not make an altogether successful editor.

In the second place, the heroine—if heroine she may be called—is no lady. Thus is my narrative doubly damned.

And in the third place, an important but hitherto unheard of personage is spoken of, namely, the young Under-Secretary to the High Gods. I'm sorry, but he would intrude, although I burnt the midnight electricity night after night in a vain endeavor to keep him out.

So you see, the only thing to recommend this yarn is that the earthly part of it,which, after all, is by far the larger part of it, really did occur. I know the woman in the case. As for the unearthly sections of the narrative, the slight celestial interludes, they don't matter one way or the other. They're merely "the author's attractive personality" if you like them, or his "labored attempt to imitate O. Henry" in case you don't.

Here's your story.

It was upon a Tuesday afternoon that little Dottye Winton simultaneously said farewell to Paris, Idaho, and one John Parkins of that delectable village, and by noon of the following Saturday the eastern express had landed her safely, bag and baggage, upon the bosom of dear old Mother Manhattan.

As soon as she had turned her slender, rather attractive little back upon Paris her name had been duly entered in the ledger of Life and Death kept by the busy Under-Secretary to the High Gods. The entry had been made opposite a number somewhere well along in the hundred thousands, for Dottye was of a type frightfully familiar. Her name was placed under the general heading of art—with a small "a"—in the section devoted to drama.

Dottye, being an optimist, cheerfully set her diminutive suede pumps upon the allegorically slippery pavements of the city of light, lobsters, and lingerie. She had no earthly doubt but within five years, at most, her name would be ablaze in three-foot letters before a Broadway temple of Art—spelt with a capital "A".

All the way from Paris to the Grand Central Station Dottye indulged in marvelously realistic visions. She saw a flaming Archie Gunn poster bearing her picture, twenty feet in height, lending a chaste dignity to the newest as well as tallest building in the world while in the course of construction. She smilingly gazed upon her carefully chosen, perfectly respectable name granting grace to the humbly useful ash-can, with "Hit —*Herald,*" written underneath. And as a finishing touch she pictured Messrs. Klaw and Erlanger signalling her from the upper front windows of the New Amsterdam, Mr. David Belasco pursuing her along the Great White Way with a ten-year contract in his trembling hand.

For Dottye had but lately caused a semi-simoon amid the arid mental waste of the slightly gilden youth of Paris, Idaho. Here she had appeared in summer opera at the Grand Opera House. Her triumph came with "Pinafore." She was given a speaking part of six consecutive interpolated words: "Oh girls, what a lovely ship!" This enthusiastic comment, the *chef-d'oeuvre* of an admiring stage manager, could be heard on matinee days across Main Street to Zeb Jones' General Merchandise Emporium. On account of her instantaneous hit her salary was raised without warning. She now received, and earned, sixteen dollars a week. From this she managed by the careful elimination of necessities carried to a hitherto unheard of degree, to save enough of the great green essential to get to the metropolis.

It was a memorable night when she, with the able assistance of Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan, took Paris by storm. She was the recipient of nineteen perfectly good bo-kays, to adopt the unaffected Parisian vernacular. That night she cut the leading lady dead in the lobby of the Palace Commercial Hotel in the presence of three likely looking drummers, six chorus men, and the proprietor. For the leading lady had remarked to all who might care to hear that she, Dottye, probably sent herself eighteen of these "floral tributes"—see the Paris Guardian. This was unkind. It was also untrue. She sent herself but sixteen. The violets which were irretrievably lost down a crack between the footlights,and the compact bunches of pansies tied with pink string, were the free-will offering from unknown but ardent admirers.

It is an historical fact that the youth of Paris went wild over Dottye. It was rumored about Hempley's Cash Grocery and Millinery Store that John Parkins, Squire Parkins' only son and heir, bought her three bottles of beer and two ham sandwiches in the super-redness of the fly-ridden dining room of the before mentioned hostelry. Many thought this too unusual to be quite true. All admitted it was undoubtedly founded upon fact. Be that as it may, John's bay mare was frequently hitched outside the Opera House. Inside, Dottye glimmered nightly, and at three matinees a week. These things no one could deny.

All Paris said it was a blessed good thing that the poor dear squire was ill. Being confined to his room he could not notice the nightly nibblings at the Gorgonzola of unrighteousness on the part of his joy and pride. Everyone predicted that Miss Winton would no doubt catch the undoubtedly desirable country mouse in the steel trap of her experience. It never occurred to Paris, even for a moment, that the mouse in question might be beating upon the doors of a trap which, for some strange reason, did not wish to fulfill its natural duties. No trap had ever done so unusual a thing before. Hence such a thing was impossible. Of one other thing was Paris agreed. The town was slowly slipping to perdition owing to the metropolitan meanderings of its rather limited sporting fraternity.

It can easily be seen that although Dottye might be a Chicagoian by birth and breeding, she was a true Broadwayite by ingrowing inclination. Even before that fatal day when through her trusting nature and her high-strung, artistic temperament, she had inadvertently placed her foot upon that so-called primrose path of pleasure from which no perfect lady may return, she had dreamed of *her* Manhattan. This isle of dreams consisted of a very small body of labor, washed by the unceasing waves of mirth, melody, and mammon.

For Dottye was quite sure of herself and of her Thespian talents. The words are hers. She probably knows just what they mean. So upon her safe arrival she planted her number twos firmly upon the asphalt of Broadway. She strolled along the lane precisely as if she had four thousand dollars in the near-trunk which casually hung from her left shoulder blade, instead of a trifle under four thousand cents.

Now that she was entering into a new life she would be good, she told herself with great firmness. She would keep her fairy feet in the straight and contracted passage which, for such as she, leads over the hill to the poor-house, or, more often, to the centre of the Brooklyn Bridge. She would work hard, Gaby Delys had better jab eight or ten extra hat pins in her laurel wreath. Then, when sure success had crowned her efforts, she might go to a certain person and tell him,—but this is a digression. Digressions are even more unpardonable than originality.

Upon hearing of these quite creditable resolutions, the young Under-Secretary to the High Gods opened his ledger. Turning to the section number fourteen, devoted to the drama, he made an entry under the W-s, on the credit side. Being young and rather inexperienced, he looked at the item for a while, a slight pucker between his rather handsome brows. As he closed the book he whistled softly, for the High Gods were asleep,

Strange to state, Manhattan was not visibly affected one way or the other by the precipitous advent of Miss Dottye Winton, late of Paris, Idaho. The Flat Iron Building still stood like the latter-day Sphinx it is, watching with the detached emotionlessness of a conductor on the Coney Island trolley the seething tide of Broadway, Fifth Avenue, and Twenty-third Street. The Singer tower never even twitched when the new bit of flotsam appeared for a moment above the troubled waters of city life. As far as Gotham was concerned, Dottye made but one more of the over, yet underdressed daughters of desire who nightly prance beneath the electric glare of the Tenderloin, to the syncopated music of the spheres.

For a week or more she called daily upon the men who sit in judgment behind the theatrical firmament studded with made-to-order stars. Their smiling young agents put her name and address, for further use, in books and their mental calling lists as well, for Dottye was good to look upon.

Her small stock of the root of all evil dwindled daily. At last the night came, as she had long realized it must, when a hasty inventory of her bag brought to light a packet of paper powders, several hair pins, one small pocket mirror, two soiled green-backs with the figure one displayed with undue prominence thereupon, three nickles, and one almost passable Canadian dime.

Her landlady had asked that morning none too pleasantly for the rent. She was supperless. Her breakfast had been made up of two languidly limp soda crackers, an egg which had all but outlived its usefulness, washed down with a bottle of milk pasteurized to the point of persecution. She visualized her lone-

ly, damp room in which she was no longer welcome. There was the pallid pink paper on the walls, the copy of "The Rock of Ages"—the "Mona Lisa" of the bourgeois—above the elaborately draped mantel shelf. The impression was distinctly upleasant.

And all the while Dottye desired food and warmth and, most of all, companionship. She was lonely on Forty-second Street—of all places—at eight o'clock at night, as the world went happily by. It was absurd of her to be envious when a huge motor-car drew up to the curb, depositing a laughing group before a restaurant ablaze with lights.

At this moment a voice casually remarked, "Hello," as if resuming an acquaintanceship of several years' standing. Dottye started visibly. She looked up into the smile of a strange young man. He was gazing fondly down upon her.

The young and unsophisticated Under-Secretary to the High Gods once again opened his loose-leaf ledger of Life and Death to the dramatic section. His brow remained troubled. He bit the end of his newly filled stylographic pen and gazed with undue professionalism at Dottye's as yet quite simple and fairly creditable account, then away between the swaying planets to where she stood, beside the man, on Forty-second Street. Being young and inexperienced, he told himself there was still a chance for her. He watched, waiting pen in hand, as the time machine toiled on in an eternity where the centuries were but seconds, where an hour marked the rise and fall of man.

If the lately lamented Mr. Webster may be relied upon when he defined a man as "an adult male," Mr. Clarence Maltbie got safely past the post. He was a male, of that there could be no doubt. Long since he had reached the years of indiscretion. His clothes and manners were as free from faults as the latest make of fountain pen. His entire personality reeked of diamonds, dinners, and dissipation. Plump as the purse of a plumber, he was as well groomed as the head barber in a fifteen-cent tonsorial establishment. Cold, calculating grey eyes looked upon life with the diagnostic detachment, the cynical amusement of the Goddess of Liberty. His conversation was as interesting as the telephone directory of Greater New York, and covered about the same ground. He was a diligent dilettante in the gentle art of disillusionment. In a word, that crowning jest of modern urban civilization, a man about town.

With the insidious insight of an inspector of customs, Dottye tabulated him upon the card index to her active mentality.

"Dining out tonight?" he asked.

"Nope," returned the recent toast of Paris, Idaho, monosyllabically direct.

For one mad magenta moment, to Dotty's gaze, the unnumbered lights along the lonely lane grew dim, gyrating unpleasantly. She had honestly meant to earn fame, self-respect, and every-woman's right to love by a mingling of honest labor and equally honest graft as worked along upper Broadway. These things might be hers, but the game was difficult at best. The odds were long.

It has been said that when a woman is cold and tired and hungry, when her visible future is a blank, her spiritual sense of proportion misses fire. This is very likely true. But it is quite ridiculous of her to grow cold and tired and hungry with cafés all about, isn't it? This is, at least, what Dottye thought.

"Wanta go along with me?"

"Where to?" asked Miss Winton, with a magnificent disregard for rhetorical rules of which she had never heard.

"Oh, to—to dinner," returned the stranger lightly.

Dottye quickly entered her recent resolutions against an empty future, pocket book and stomach. The latter won as the resolutions were rounding into the home stretch.

"We'll have plenty to eat and drink," he urged, "and then—"

"And then?" she asked rather palely.

"Why—"

Strange to say, the man about town hesitated but was not lost thereby.

"I'll come, Mr.—?"

Not knowing the brand of this superior and timely manna offered in the form of man, she paused.

"Maltbie," he vouchsafed affably. He saw that the game was his. "Clarence Maltbie, at your service. You must be a stranger in the dell if you don't know little me, at least by sight. I'm agent—"

She interrupted quietly.

"I'll come, Mr. Maltbie," she said.

Dottye slipped her arm through his. Even so, she stumbled as she walked. For, you see, she was an emotional body.

A month passed quite pleasantly and quickly for Mr. Clarence Maltbie. At the end of it Dottye told herself that she really did not mind the life so much, after all. It was much better than being hungry, and she was never lonely now. The casting aside of her resolutions was rather like a mental cold bath. The first plunge, a shiver, then the worst was over. But you must not think.

Dottye lived in a respectable little Harlem flat. The flat was not what you might call luxurious, nor was it unduly roomy. But it was quite big enough for two, and the quiet wall paper and mission furniture were a great improvement on the furnished room, the ugly pink walls, and "The Rock of Ages."

If Dottye had any regrets in connection with her cast-off resolutions, she kept them to herself. If she ever thought of one John Parkins, of Paris, Idaho, no one ever knew of it. She never bored Mr. Maltbie with her past, present, or her future. She attended strictly to her business, which was to please him. This she did. He was most kind.

So when the month was up it was he who suggested a dinner in honor of their first anniversary. He picked out the Café de la Paix, noted alike for its French name, its British head-waiter, its excellent Italian cooking, the Bohemian character of its habitués, and the Americanness of its turkey-trotting.

That delirious dinner is still the talk of the Tenderloin. The fame thereof spread from the Battery to the heights of Harlem and beyond. The finale was telegraphed from Philadelphia to the Golden Gate, from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. *Pater familias*, throughout the land, sandwiched it between his Peerless Predigested Poplets and his sprint for the eight-fourteen. On the strength of it Dottye received a vaudeville offer that made Eva Tanguay really care and the salary of the President of these United States look like—that's another story.

The Café de la Paix was thronged with the usual crowd. Jostling one another pleasantly were confidence men. millionaires, journalists, actors, lumber kings, uncles from the Golden West, young men from everywhere except New York. The guests who were not otherwise engaged danced in a hollow square in the centre of the room, while the orchestra played the latest and greatest success of Tin Pan Alley. All was gilt, gayety, and glamour. Dottye ordered salad as a firm foundation upon which to build a handsome mausoleum for the decent interment of her hopes. Her benefactor knew everyone by name, from the waiters down to the guests. He ordered a light, sparkling effervescent beverage called champagne.

Several hours passed pleasantly. The Café de la Paix took upon itself the in-

tensely social appearance of the semi-monthly meetings of the Improved Beneficial Order of Amalgamated Soda Shooters. Miss Winton was exploring with childish interest the unusually extensive interior of a lobster when Mr. John Parkins of Paris, Idaho, put in his Parisian and rather rural appearance. As Mr. Maltbie later remarked, with his naive succulence, to the excited young representative of the New York Morning Wail: "He looked like the concentrated essence of 'Way Down East.' "

John strode between the tables heavily. He peered from side to side, scanning the openly interested patrons of the Café. As Charles Garvice would remark, he was the cynosure of all eyes. His neat but nobby suit of black had come from a pile in Zeb Jones' General Merchandise Emporium. With the black bow tie of theatric Bohemianism, it bespoke mourning. His stubby, high heeled yellow boots, a weird looking wart on either toe, suggested neatly wrapped hams. They lent an air of funereal levity to the occasion. He came slowly towards where Dottye sat smiling. His approach, dignified as the Desbrosses street ferry, left a trail of wordless wonder in its wake. He was as out of place in that café as a piece of white meat in a chicken pie.

Dottye watched his slow approach with fascinated eyes. Her brain grew suddenly clear, as the sky clears on a windy winter night. She knew instinctively that he was coming after her. She realized that his future happiness lay close beside her future misery in the palm of her hand, the overly manicured hand which held the silver oyster fork. She was as self-controlled as a Bowery policeman. Splashing an alarmed oyster into a glass of burning cocktail, Dottye smiled up at John. In the interim she had quite made up her mind.

When young Mr. Parkins reached the table where Dottye sat entirely surrounded by bottles, glasses, bread crumbs, and Clarence Maltbie, he towered far above them. It is true that he was not as correctly dressed as he fondly believed. It is true that he strongly suggested the third act of "The Old Homestead." But it is also true that he looked like a man. Many of those present had never seen a man before. They looked upon him with surprise and suspicion. They stared long and hard, much as if a dodo had hopped upon the adjacent yum-yum tree which cast its dusty shade over the perspiring orchestra.

This orchestra had just completed an unusually temperamental rendition of the "Anvil Chorus," that crowning triumph of musical expression. The echoes should have reached the outraged ears of the frogs croaking Wagnerily in the Jersey swamps. A New Rochelle Sunday morning silence settled over the festive followers of the unhappily defunct Bacchus. Drama was in the air. Dottye took upon herself the air of Nazimova. It was not her fault if there was a slight dash of Stella Mayhew on the side. She had set herself a part to play. There was no doubt that she would carry it through to the bitter end to the best of her ability. Taking Eugene Walter for a model, her woman's love of self-sacrifice for a prompt-book, Dottye rang up the curtain without a rehearsal.

"How are you, John?" she greeted him.

Dottye wisely started in the fashionable school of suppressed emotion, founded by Mrs. Fiske, but continued by many followers possessing the dramatic ability of a Bermuda onion.

"Dottye," he said, ignoring both Maltbie and her question, "I've come for you, to take you back to Idaho."

"You've come for me," she returned, stating a fact as evident as the outcome of a musical comedy.

"Yes," he told her with Western directness. "I've come to take you home. To take you away from all this. I asked in Paris if you would marry me. You knew how much I meant it, but said I must be joking. You knew I wasn't. Later on, you will remember, you changed your reason for not marrying me. You said that Dad would never consent. This was more than likely true. Now that he is dead,"—he grasped his hat a bit tighter in his strong, fit looking hands, but his voice did not for a moment shake,—"I'm very lonesome. I've thought a lot about you since you left Paris. Dad left me all he had. It wasn't a great deal, but it's a pretty good sum for Idaho. We'll leave for Paris in the morning. I don't like New York,—not *this* New York, at any rate. I've been here for days and days, searching for you."

His resonant voice carried to the far end of the Café de la Paix. A sullen silence had settled upon the crowd. Mr. Maltbie watched with cynically amused interest. He was near the center of the stage, and enjoyed it.

Dottye listened to every word John said. To this day she can repeat that conversation word for word. His earnestness hurt her with a pain that was all but physical. She looked almost passionately at his clear, unsoiled blue eyes. She could not but compare his healthy, ruddy complexion with the pasty faces all about her. To her he rose superior to his clothes, which, against the background of his ringing voice, counted as nothing. And all the while, somewhere in the subconsciousness of her brain, she was sketching out the world-old drama that she had planned to play.

"You've come to take me home," she said. "Me?"

"Yes."

"For heaven's sake," she returned, slightly overacting the part, "what do you know about that? My dear boy, patter back to the dear old farm. That's where you belong. This sort of thing is what's cut out for me. Out there I'd make your life a living hell in about a week or so. Can you see me doing a farm scene, with straw in my golden tresses, a non-property milk pail on my arm, the Quaker City Quartette grouped up stage about the dear old well?"

"Dottye!" he cried, pain in his voice.

She silenced him with a gesture.

"One moment," she said. "I heard *you* out, you know. Can you focus your soulful orbs upon little me getting up at six in the morning to milk eighteen or nineteen cows, without the orchestra out front playing the 'Spring song' softly? My dear boy, believe me when I say that I'd make you the laughing stock of Paris and the entire state of Idaho. In real life, work on the farm isn't done to a musical accompaniment. And I don't care for work without music."

There came a silence for a while, a heavy silence you could feel. The only sounds were the honk-honk of passing motor-cars and the rumble of the great city, a rumble sensed rather than heard. John Parkins broke the spell that seemed to hang over the Café de la Paix.

"You won't come?" he said.

This phase of the situation had not entered his scheme of things at all. He was not familiar with the popular drama of renunciation, it not being the rage in Idaho. Therefore Dottye's plan was not made evident to him.

She laughed. The laugh could not be called even a mild success. It rang false in a scene where everything was false, from the hair of the ladies to the manners of the men.

"Run along back to the farm, my lad. We'll ring down the curtain on this truly rural drama before the audience hands us a Cherry Sisters welcome. Anyway,

my gentleman friend is growing bored. Aren't you, Clarence?"

Mr. Maltbie, who was far from being ennuied, did not reply.

Once again the man from Idaho took the scene into his hands.

"If you don't come," he said, very slowly, without the slightest affectation, "I'll kill myself. I can't live without you, I know I can't, because I've tried."

Back in the restaurant someone laughed nervously. A waiter dropped his metal tray with a clang upon the tessellated mosaic floor. The episode had gone far beyond the Eugene Walter level, and was headed for a Pinero finish.

The smoke from Mr. Maltbie's smouldering cigar blew in her face. For a moment she closed her eyes. In that moment she saw the woman she might endeavor to be, if she had but a chance. That chance was being offered her now. It might not come again. A play for happiness, decency, and love. But at whose expense? She put the question to herself sharply. At the expense of a man who had treated her as men treat the other kind of women, the kind they usually marry. Then she opened her eyes upon the woman she felt she was, a false jewel in an even falser setting. She told herself, as such women do, that her kind are not born again.

"I mean just what I said," John was saying. "If you won't come, I'll kill myself. I love you. What is more, I believe in you. And although everything points the other way, I feel that you love me. I discovered this fact in the depot that day you left Paris. I find nothing to disprove it now. So, for the third time, will you come?"

"Nothing doing," said Miss Winton, with visible effort. "And don't pull off any of that 'Madame X' stuff around here. It don't go, off the stage, especially in New York. It's only silly."

"Your answer is final?" asked John.

Dottye grasped the edge of the table to steady herself preparatory to her grand finale. She had almost forgotten both Nazimova and Stella Mayhew now, and was two-thirds a woman, doing what she thought was for the best. Her face was as pale as a Coney Island dawn.

"Your answer is final?" repeated Mr. Parkins. His voice was cold and grey, for hope had somehow fled.

"Sure," she said.

Then John Parkins rose to the dramatic heights called for by the occasion. He did the deed that put Dottye in the headliner class for life. A real, third-act, thirty-two calibre revolver shot brought the hypnotized gathering to its feet. The young man from Idaho tumbled upon the littered table, upsetting a bottle of champagne, several glasses, and all of Dottye's deep laid plans.

In the moment following, amid the banging of doors, the voices of men and the shrieks of women, Dottye stooped over, before all the gaping crowd, and kissed the forehead under the rumpled, unkempt hair.

"Dear God!" she cried aloud, "why couldn't you let me do just one half-decent thing? I loved him so, oh God! I loved him so."

The busy Under-Secretary to the High Gods sat with the ledger of Life and Death open at Dottye's page, in section number fourteen, devoted to drama. He moved his troubled gaze from the earthly tumult of the Café de la Paix, where a man lay dead, to the unearthly quietude of the swirling, rain-washed milky way. For a while he did not write. Then picking up the Golden Rule, he slashed a crimson line across the credit side. This for the present, balanced her account. Then, taking his halo from a jasper peg, he started for a nearby lunch-room where he could procure an ambrosia sandwich and a cup of heavenly coffee.

# When "Bug" Cleaned the Slate

BY ROGER FISON

*Seated comfortably in your Pullman chair have you ever thought of the faithful sentinel, hand on key, keeping his lonely vigil as your train, creaking and roaring, flashed past a railroad telegrapher's shack? Here is a blood-warming story of one of his kind, who, discredited and beaten by John Barleycorn, "cleaned the slate" when his chance came.*

"BUG" Hagan might have continued indefinitely as night telegrapher at Silo Pass had he not accidentally delayed the Oriental Limited on the evening of October 13 and injudiciously requested the road's general manager to go to a warmer climate when that dignitary had somewhat unjustly and severely lectured him on the higher ethics of moving limited trains by telegraph. Bug was then informed in very convincing phraseology that his services with the Big G railway would end with the conclusion of that night. And they did end, though with a somewhat sensational climax.

The crew of Extra 437 West, arriving there at daybreak, found not only the telegraph shack reduced to ashes, but discovered Bug, the sole inhabitant of the lonely mountain pass, comfortably reclining against an empty beer keg, whooping and hurrahing in a most undignified manner. And while the origin of the beer keg remained a mystery, Bug did manage to explain how the accidental knocking over of an oil lamp had served to ignite the frail wooden structure.

When the division superintendent dropped off at the pass a few hours later he positively refused to listen to Bug's earnest pleadings that he had taken his last drink, denied him transportation, and instructed all train crews not to carry the discharged telegrapher, whereupon Bug mysteriously disappeared without so much as requesting his time check.

At 5.30 the next evening a lone passenger arrived at Silo Pass in an empty box car. He was tall, slim, decidedly dark, dead broke, and needed sleep as much as he needed a shave. His clothing was soiled and his hair was unkempt. Of course, none of the train crew knew that Bug Hagan occupied M. and O. 4553 when Extra 271 East pulled into Silo Pass. Bug was scarcely aware of the fact himself, inasmuch as he had spent the greater part of that day at Oval, the first saloon west, in drinking up the savings of a trifle less than six weeks' strict sobriety.

Vacating the empty car some two hundred feet west of where the former telegraph office had stood, the derelict staggered along for several feet, suddenly tripped, sprawled into a heap of cinders, and there fell into a profound slumber.

Only because he was chilled to the very bone, did he awake five hours later. It was pitch dark and as he painfully arose on his unsteady limbs, he became vaguely conscious of the fact that he was on familiar ground. A friendly light guided him to the new telegraph office—an old red caboose located on a short spur about three hundred feet east of where the former office had been. The company, realizing the urgent need of a night station at Silo Pass, had lost no time in placing this ancient piece of rolling stock into commission until better

quarters could be arranged for. It was when he peered through the window of this queer office that a strange sight met Bug's gaze.

At a small table on which ticked one lonely instrument sat the newly ensconced telegrapher, Oliver Wentworth Sheffield—the product of an eastern telegraph school.

O. W. S. was one of those wavy-brown-locks-silken-socks affairs who spoke with a decided feminine accent; sported high white collars; neither smoked, chewed nor drank, and had a particular aversion for all first class telegraphers. They were, he said, "an extremely rude set of fellows."

The company had installed Oliver at Silo Pass not only because it was dreadfully short of operators, but also because Silo Pass, in spite of its convenience as a night office, was the lightest telegraph job on the mountain division. And because Oliver Wentworth Sheffield was the lightest telegrapher on the division, in point of ability, he at once acquired for himself the title of the "The Lid," an appellation never applied to a competent telegrapher.

Oliver Wentworth was tenderly caressing a dainty packet of pink ribboned letters signed "Yours Forever, Honore," when his meditations were rudely interrupted by the sudden entrance of Bug Hagan, now both hungry and thirsty.

Bug smiled good-naturedly, scratched his head, and for a moment eyed the occupant with mild curiosity. He had never before seen its duplicate on the mountain division.

"Good-evening, pard-ner," he finally exclaimed, extending his hand. "Am I too late for a—a hand-out?"

"The Lid," exceedingly indignant at Bug's familiarity, scorned the proffered hand and rose to his feet.

"My superiors have instructed me to forbid your presence in this office," he declared hotly. "Please leave at once."

"Why say, Mister—operator—"

"Sheffield is my name," corrected "The Lid."

"Mis-ter Shef-field, you haven't a —a drink, have you?"

This intemperate request was too much for the self-exalted youth from Janesville. He turned away with a sneer, reseated himself at the table, and began calling "D S," the despatcher's office, though his flighty signals scarcely resembled Morse characters.

Bug, extremely weak from hunger and thirst, passed slowly out of the door, then very deliberately seated himself by a red lantern which had been placed near the track in lieu of the regular overhead signal. Here he began unconsciously to review certain facts concerning his past career. He knew that his reduction in rank from first trick despatcher at "D S" to night operator at Silo Pass had come about only after he had failed to avail himself of the dozen or more opportunities given him by his superiors to brace up and cut out the booze. And though his genial good nature, generosity, and unusual railroading ability had won for him a host of friends on the mountain division, these availed him nothing now. Even this "ham" operator despised him, and—

The sharp whistle of a locomotive around the west curve had interrupted, and a moment later a long string of Pullmans, carrying a luxurious observation car, pulled up in front of the Silo Pass telegraph office. Jim Tyler, the omnipresent division superintendent, was the first man to alight from the head-end, and Bug now completely sobered in thought and in action, collared him at once.

"Captain," he begged earnestly, "pass me to Spokane. I *really* want to brace up."

"Bug," replied the official, firmly yet

not unkindly, "I've heard that reform story of yours for the past two years. When you were despatching at "D S" I took more from you than from any despatcher who ever pounded brass there—simply because of your ability. When I moved you to Silo Pass it was your last chance. I can't place any more faith in your promises. Besides, you can *never* redeem yourself with this road. I can't carry you, Bug."

Bug Hagan entertained a hazy idea that he might turn over a new leaf could he get back to civilization and obtain other employment. Several years previous, any of the commercial telegraph companies or press associations would have clamored for his services, but Bug had loved the rails too well then to quit railroading in the Washington Cascades. Now he had no choice, and this he bitterly realized as the superintendent abruptly quit his side and boarded the train.

A moment later Conductor Jones emerged from the telegraph office, having received only a clearance, a fact which Bug did not fail to observe. There was a sudden nervous signal from his glowing lantern, and he, too, swung aboard the departing train.

Bug, unsuccessful in his attempt to jump the blind baggage, sadly watched the special's tail-lights pass over the east siding switch, for with their passing fled also what little hope he had possessed.

"The Lid," with a far-away look in his shifty gray optics, had again taken up the last missive from his absent "Honore," and in its contents he was thoroughly immersed when Bug Hagan for the second time appeared at the caboose door. This time he entered without hesitation for he was curious to learn, if possible, why a red signal had been displayed when the special received only a clearance. A red signal on the Big G usually indicated orders.

A sudden feeling of resentment took possession of the old-timer as he watched this poor incompetent tenderly fondling a highly perfumed missive when he should have been reporting the departure of Second No. 1, the special. Bug Hagan had never railroaded in that way. Not only had he OS-d (reported) trains promptly, but during his trick knew as well as the despatcher did the location of every train on the division. Few were the Morse signals that escaped his well-trained ear.

"I shall report you, if you continue to hang about this office," warned "The Lid," looking up from his correspondence with an extremely annoyed expression.

"Better report that special *first*," responded Bug somewhat sullenly.

Extremely disgusted with the visitor's bold effrontery, "The Lid" turned away his fair countenance and instead of OS-ing, picked up from the table a bundle of magazines devoted mostly to love stories. His face colored guiltily, and instantly he slammed them down again, yet not quickly enough, for the old telegrapher had caught sight of that familiar. yellow tissue book, a "31" train order.

"Take 'em up," ordered Bug, his dark eyes now ablaze with authority, then snatched the train order from where it lay. "The Lid," having accidentally covered it up, had been too deeply interested in love affairs to remember its receipt, let alone its delivery, and had absent-mindedly issued the clearance without even the despatcher's consent. The order was addressed to Second No. 1, the train that had just left, and to No. 66 at Valley, the first station east.

"Second No. 1, Engine 910," it read, "will meet No. 66, Engine 901 at Silo Pass instead of Valley. W. T. T."

Hagan instantly grasped the whole dreadful situation. Somewhere between Valley and Silo Pass the two trains were bound to crash together.

"Call Valley, tell 'em hold 66," he

roared to the frightened incompetent. "Stay there till I get back."

Then snatching up a white signal lantern from the table, he dashed out of the east door. Passenger trains sometimes stopped in the lower yards at Silo Pass to examine parts of their equipment before descending from the 3400 feet height at the pass to the 1000 feet altitude in the valley below. Aware of this, Bug sped down the east track hopeful that he might recall the departed train, but after a few swings of his lantern he realized the futility of his plan. As he hastily returned to the telegraph office he caught a glimpse of a dim figure speeding down the west track. It was "The Lid."

"Damned yellow streak," cursed Hagan; then, rushing into the caboose, leaped to the box relay and grasped the sending key.

"My God, Bug," flashed the despatcher's office in Morse characters that fairly tumbled over one another, "that Lid's fixed us. Couldn't catch 66; left Valley fifteen minutes ago. The wrecker—"

Here the circuit opened, and Bug observing a rusty switch key hanging on the wall nearby, was suddenly seized with a wild idea.

He snatched up the key, then a coupling pin, and climbing to the cupola parted the two iron wires that entered there. This accomplished he fairly dashed out of doors to the spur switch, quickly unlocked it, threw it to main line, then returned to the caboose. Here he released both brakes, then pushed away the two blocking ties. A heavy crowbar that lay nearby, he dragged to the rear of the cab, wedged its sharp end between the rail and the wheel, then threw his whole weight onto the handle.

The telegraph office moved slightly.

A few inches more—then, as though realizing that some important duty was required of it, the ancient piece of rolling stock awakened to life, moved a trifle faster, and shaking like an old skeleton, creaked over the spur switch onto the main line.

Bug closed and locked the switch, then rushed toward the caboose, caught it, and swung aboard.

The steep down-grade giving the desired momentum to the now thoroughly awakened telegraph office, its lone pilot snatched up a lighted red lantern and grimly took his place on the front platform.

Up in "D S" office at division headquarters, "Old Bill" Lahey, the aged chief despatcher, watched the clock coolly ticking off the tragic seconds. He knew that Second No. 1, expecting to have a clear track east to Valley, would steam down the eight mile mountain grade in fifteen minutes, then dash onto the ten mile stretch of level valley track where it was bound to crash into No. 66, a fast freight of twenty loads. The lines in his care-worn face deepened as he painfully awaited the coming tragedy. Suddenly he tottered to his desk.

"One trainload of sleeping passengers hurled into eternity," he moaned; then sank into a chair and silently bowed his gray head.

Could the old chief have seen at this moment the dingy red caboose—Silo Pass telegraph office—tearing madly down 39 Mountain in pursuit of Second No.1; could he have seen the wild-eyed pilot clinging desperately with one hand to the platform railing, the other frantically waving a dim red signal, the old chief might, too, have feared for the safety of one, Bug Hagan.

The caboose was now hurtling along at a terrific speed, groaning, shaking, and squeaking, its lone occupant expecting momentarily to be flung from the platform and hurled against the sharp rocks of the canyon through which he was passing.

Suddenly the car swung recklessly around a curve. Hagan clung all the tighter to the railing and braced his foot against an iron rod. He was approaching Chimney Rock bridge, a steel structure one hundred and twenty-five feet high, crossing a thundering mountain stream which rushed through the rocky chasm below.

Passenger trains had strict orders to run no faster than ten miles an hour over this bridge. Bug was going all of fifty when he braced himself for the perilous ride.

Like a flash the little red caboose shot onto the steel rails of the bridge, swerved mightily to the right, then to the left, suddenly righted itself, and the next moment was tearing helter-skelter down the last mile stretch of canyon preceding the level valley. As it reached a straight piece of track, there appeared through the darkness two tiny, gleaming specks—the special's tail lights.

Knowing that Superintendent Tyler and the rear brakeman were both old telegraphers, and praying that one of them might now be occupying the observation car, Bug instantly began some strange maneuvering with his lantern.

Three short waves—S; one longer wave—T; one short wave (space) one short wave—O; five short waves—P; six short waves—6; six short waves—6. Which translated into Morse signals, read: Stop 66!

Instantly there flashed back from the rear of the passenger train two short waves—the telegraphic, "I understand."

The rear brakeman, acting on the warning, jerked frantically at a signal cord, air brakes screamed and screeched, and Second No. 1 came to an abrupt stop. Conductor Jones reached the head-end in time to see Engine 901 nose into the headlight of 910, then stop entirely in obedience to the air brakes which *her* engineer had hastily applied.

When Bug heard the pounding of the two locomotives ahead he realized that his own position was becoming perilous. After tightly setting both brakes he determined to jump, and jump he did, unfortunately just as the caboose rushed onto a short trestle. Down he plunged, headfirst, striking hard on the rocky bed of the little stream below, while his wild steed shot on two hundred feet ahead and crashed into the rear of the observation car.

Superintendent Tyler, standing nearby, heard the strange buckling of iron, steel and wood. He saw not only the former Silo Pass telegraph office firmly weld itself into the rear of the empty observation car, but saw its brave pilot jump.

As he rushed to Hagan's aid, an almost breathless conductor joined him.

"Thank God 66 was coming no faster," panted Jones. "Three hot boxes on head-end. Everybody—"

"Safe," he would have said, but they had now reached the almost lifeless form of the old telegrapher. Bug lay on a huge rock in the little stream below the trestle—a pathetic, crumpled heap.

"Are they—all right, Captain?" he asked weakly as the superintendent tenderly lifted up the battered head.

"None hurt or killed, Bug."

"Then—then—I—re—deemed myself, Captain?"

"Yes, Bug," whispered the superintendent quite brokenly, "you have cleaned the slate."

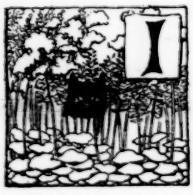
Then by the glow of the bright lantern, he watched the faint but peaceful smile flicker from the pallid countenance.

A brave soul passed silently up the Unknown Valley and one hundred and ten passengers rode on in safety.

# Hastily Yours

BY LEONORA PRICE KIRK

*Zip! and you are whizzed away with Edward Duffield in a honking motor car on a gay and wild search for a marrying parson. If you think it's easy to get married in a hurry, keep your seat and follow Cupid in a breathless race with the Sunset Limited.*



I Edward Duffield, in full possession of my faculties—such as they are—was loafing on a corner down town, unconscious that danger hovered hawk-like above my day-dreamy head.

But my inner poise was thrown into a panic when an old college chum swooped around the block in a touring car, which I recognized later as my own. How friend and car had met was a matter of lightning speculation as I felt myself hoisted by the nape of the neck and dumped headlong into the honking machine which continued to register sixty miles per hour.

As if addressing the old woman who went up in a basket, I blankly quavered, " 'Whither, oh, whither, oh, whither so high?' "

With his gaze glued to the vanishing thoroughfare Denny Dickover replied in staccato tones, "I'll drop out at the railway station for the tickets. You'll spin around, Duff, and pounce upon a minister —any creed'll do. Here, take this license along, he might be particular about such details. And *hurry*—we have to be married before that six-thirty train pulls out."

"Yes, yes," I soothed. "But Denny, old kid, isn't this rather sudden? Who's to be married——you and I?"

"Been engaged two years, thought you knew. Too poor. Descendant of disinherited line. Grandpa's fault, you know —loved grandma more than fortune they cut him out of. Now great-aunt, in dotage, at outs with kindred, writes me to take next train, but not to come without wife! Insists on wife. Wants to see her, to like her, to live with us. Of course she'll like Janie. And so Aunt Mehitable will back me in my new business venture here and leave me sole heir to her estate. But—presto chango!—if wife and I don't show up in Davisville, Illinois, by next Thursday, eccentric relative will immediately summon nephew in Canada. Her letter's been delayed by Arizona washout, and now—the Lord have mercy upon us!—we've barely time to reach there. Our united name will be Dennis if we miss that six-thirty. So first parson you can run down bring over to 2634 Ralston." And with a flip of his heels Denny was over the back seat and away to the ticket office.

I went spinning on.

Parson? I didn't know one by sight. Being merely a summer tourist in the town where my friend had lately settled, I knew very few people indeed.

In my distress of mind I almost ran over a man working on the main gas pipes. Cheerily I bade him good-day. His response was curt. I ventured to ask him where I might find a minister. Immediately his features limbered up and an unmistakable grin dawned upon the south side of his countenance.

Giving him an excuse for further relaxation, I exclaimed in tones wrung with anxiety, "I'm in a *hurry*! "

"Afraid you're up against it, stranger," sympathetically replied the gas man. "All the Protestants have gone to that convention in the next town below here, and there isn't a Catholic priest within a radius of forty miles."

"I did so want a minister. But of course a justice—"

"Say, I got it!" And the gas man enthusiastically slapped his knee. "There's a local preacher lives two blocks over on Madison Street. Blaisdel's his name. He was knocked out by sunstroke several years ago, so can't have the responsibility of a church. Runs a little truck garden and peddles his own vegetables. At times he's a trifle queer"—tapping his forehead—"but he can tie the life-knot all right. Lot of folks ask him to officiate just because they feel sorry for him—think he really needs the fee. He's stone deaf, so perhaps didn't attend that meeting. Better take your megaphone along—and good luck to you."

Waving the gas man a grateful farewell, I turned into Madison Street. It did not take me long to locate the little truck garden. To my delight the Reverend Mr. Blaisdel was at home.

He was a portly gentleman with iron-gray hair and a waggish goatee to match. I was glad they matched—it gave the impression of an harmonious temperament.

But how misleading impressions often are!

He received me in the study and I felt more at ease when I saw the interview was to take place behind closed doors.

"Mr. Blaisdel!" I vociferated.

"Eh, young man? Yes—yes—go on."

"Come with me—hurry!"

"Eh—eh?"

"Come!"

I waved my right arm toward the door.

"Yes—yes. Accident? Fire?"

"No—*no*. Friend wishes to be married."

"Eh? Raise your voice a trifle. I'm a little hard of hearing."

"My friend—wants you—marriage—ceremony!"

"Marry! Sure I will."

Mr. Blaisdel was radiant now. He patted me on the shoulder as I boosted him into the car.

"All right, young man. I'll see you through. License?"

I handed the document over, thinking to give him time to peruse it as we sped to 2634 Ralston, at which destination we arrived in a very short time.

My friend's fiancée, Miss Janie Deane, proved to be a trim little thing with curly dark hair and Irish blue eyes. She gave us a cordial welcome. Now Janie was an orphan and had no near relatives. The people with whom she boarded had just left the house for several hours of shopping when Denny breathlessly brought his news, and they were not likely to return in time for the wedding. Therefore the negro cook, the gardener and I were to be the only witnesses.

In speaking to Miss Deane I lowered my voice, though it was quite unnecessary.

"Do you know the deaf and dumb alphabet?" I asked her.

"No—why?"

"Then don't put on the soft pedal when you converse with him."

So Janie screamed in the tones of a tragedy queen, "Come into the living room."

The Reverend Mr. Blaisdel, instead of sinking languidly into the proffered chair to await the arrival of the prospective groom, moved nearer the window, adjusted his spectacles, and cleared his throat. Then he drew a small black book from his pocket.

"Going to coach you up on the vows before Denny comes," I mumbled to Janie. "Don't you think you ought to thank me for bringing such a kind—"

"Dearly beloved"—we heard intoned from the region of the window.

At that melancholy chant I shuddered. Janie blushed.

"It's a mighty solemn occasion," I opined, "but the parson's going to make it a long sight solemner than it ought to be. Shout to him, Miss Deane, that you haven't passed away—"

"My friends," said the minister kindly, patronizingly, "if you'll stand nearer one another—"

Janie sent me a puzzled look. Uncomfortably I noticed that the cook and gardener exchanged a swift glance. None of us knew what to say, so nobody said.

"I thought," remarked Mr. Blaisdel to me, "that you were in a hurry to be married. There is no need of further delay since we have the license. Come."

Janie gasped. I could feel my face turn a reddish purple—my high lights are always that hue.

"We are waiting for *him,*" I whooped.

"Waiting? No need to wait."

"I am not the one. *He* will soon be here."

"No need to get nervous, my boy. A few minutes and all will be over."

I sighed heavily. We heard the cook snicker.

"Join right hands," came the ministerial command.

Miss Deane backed across the room. Again I appealed to Mr. Blaisdel.

"*I* am not to be married," I explained in tones that would have given a marble statue the headache.

This time he heard me. From his goatee to his forhead there uprose a flush of righteous indignation.

"What!" he angrily expostulated. "You will leave the lady in the lurch—"

"*I* am not the one!" I bawled.

The cook put her checkered apron over her face. The gardener turned an expressive back. Janie Deane was too dumfounded for utterance. She just sat there and gazed at me in a sort of fascinated wonderment.

"You'll marry her all right," growled the Reverend Mr. Blaisdel, now thoroughly alert to his duty. "Janie Deane, step forward and join the right hand of Dennis Dickover."

Janie refused to step. Also, her right hand was put behind her in a very determined manner.

"Who," questioned the minister in caustic tones, "am I to understand is the reluctant one?"

"Wait!" I yelled in exasperation. "It's all right—everything's all right."

A quick step was heard upon the porch. Janie smiled.

"It's all wrong," snapped our tormenter just as Denny entered the room, "and I won't wait."

"What's wrong?" cried Mr. Dickover, brusquely, as he crossed the room and drew Janie's right hand through his arm.

"This whole disgraceful affair," commented the officiating clergyman.

"*Disgraceful!*" My friend faced about with an expression which would have done credit to the Arch Enemy himself.

"Oh, Denny!" Janie choked her laughter behind her handkerchief. "He's all muddled. He thinks I'm to marry Mr. Duffield."

"I'll straighten that out," said Denny Dickover.

"Slow—slow," I warned.

"You're mistaken," roared Denny. "*I* am to marry Miss Deane."

"I guess not!" retorted Mr. Blaisdel with asperity. And he stubbornly set his goatee.

"*You* tell him," I whispered to Janie.

So she screeched, "I want to marry *him,*" patting Dennis' arm.

Mr. Blaisdel scowled. "You're too late making up your mind, young lady. If you've been running a double game I'll certainly perform no mock ceremony."

"See here," ordered Dennis Dickover, "drop that!"

"Calm down, Denny," I interposed. "Remember he's a minister."

"You think I'll stand his talking to my wife like that?"

"She isn't your wife—*yet*," I sardonically murmured.

Which simply set the groom-elect off again.

"That license is mine!" he thundered. "Hurry—we want to catch a train."

"Not a likely story, young man," scoffed the parson. "I'll not be a party to any such proceeding. And I'll not marry either of you to this young lady. But I shall keep this license until the matter is thoroughly investigated."

My friend turned alarmingly pale. "Hell!—What am I going to do?" he inquired of me.

"In swearing speak in a lowered tone," I advised. "It would go against your case should he overhear."

Then it was, the cook came to our rescue. There were some new neighbors a few doors above us—Smith by name. The man wore a long black coat and looked like a clergyman. Perhaps he would come over.

So I rang up the Smith residence, and, without explaining the nature of our dilemma, requested the young minister to call at once.

Our new neighbor responded with alacrity. Although the Reverend Mr. Blaisdel could not hear what we said he guessed in part, and conscientiously stood his ground.

Mr. Smith, young, affable, flurriedly eager, ushered himself into the room. His coat was long, his tie was sombre. He looked the ceremonial part all right but I did not quite understand the expression of melancholy anticipation upon his boyish face.

I rose to explain, but was majestically waved back by my friend, Mr. Blaisdel.

"Have nothing to do with this affair," he said to his youthful colleague.

"Why? What—" and Mr. Smith looked searchingly at us.

Again the older man admonished: "Just keep your hands off until after the investigation."

Mr. Smith cleared his throat, and, at my signal, raised his voice: "Then let's hasten the investigation so as not to interfere with the proper care of the remains."

An ominous silence gripped us.

At last, in a choking voice, I spoke out in meeting. "Mr. Dickover and Miss Deane wish to be married—not—not interred."

"I'm disappointed," remarked our new neighbor. "I left important matters—understanding that you required my services."

"We thought you were a minister. Don't go!" I beseeched. "We need help. Can't you pacify him?" and I cautiously rolled one eye toward the old man at the window.

"What's the trouble?" questioned the undertaker.

"They're both contending for the hand of this young woman," explained the Reverend Blaisdel, "and she, having suddenly had a change of heart, is willing to be married to the other man on the license issued to the man whom she first consented to marry."

"He's deaf," groaned poor Denny. "And he has misunderstood the whole thing. Has our names mixed."

"That doesn't explain matters," replied the undertaker. "You'll have to be identified, and Miss Deane can then marry the one for whom the license was issued—or, the other man can obtain a license. It is really quite simple, you know."

Certainly! How stupid of us—and with two honest witnesses present. Maria, the cook, and James, the faithful gar-

dener, at our request swore that Denny was himself.

But old Blaisdel only scoffed. "A frame-up," he said to the undertaker. "I'll take no testimony from *paid* witnesses."

The undertaker looked solemn.

"*He* is Mr. Dickover," the parson went on excitedly. "It was he who gave me the license—brought me here. And now he goes back on the young woman, and she, humiliated at being jilted, is willing to be married to Edward Duffield on a license that would make the marriage illegal."

The undertaker frowned. Things certainly looked queer.

"What does Miss Deane say?" and he turned to her.

If Janie had only dissolved into tears, had given way to heart-rending sobs, all might yet have gone well. But as it was, she sat down and began to laugh hysterically.

"Honey, don't take the high-strikes," counseled the cook, her dusky face a study in expression.

The undertaker here wrote something in his note book and handed it to Mr. Blaisdel.

"They're plotting," muttered Denny. "See here, Duff, we've got to force him to terms. Of course Janie and I could run for that train and be married in Chicago, but there'd be talk about our leaving without the ceremony—*he'd* not keep his mouth shut. (And I've *got* to reach Davisville by next Thursday.)"

"Don't fly off the handle," I admonished. "That kid undertaker is trying to show off. If we're not careful he'll cause us trouble. Win him over to our side, Den."

Dennis Dickover squared his jaw. "I'm going to get that license," he announced. "Then we'll seek a justice of the peace. You keep your eye on the kid while I attack the enemy from the rear."

"Go to it, pal. But I'm afraid it's a dangerous plan. The kid's beginning to looked worked up and suspicious, and I have never liked the stubborn set of old B's goatee."

Well, Denny was game. He walked straigh. up to that uniter of souls and said, in loud, firm tones, "Either marry me to Miss Deane or else return that license."

Mr. Blaisdel glared at the prospective groom. "I'll marry neither you, Mr. Duffield, nor your confederate, Mr. Dickover, to Miss Deane. If that young woman is in such a state of mind she cannot protect herself, I will protect her. Young man, did you take me for a Mormon priest?"

Then the heart within me sank. I saw there was blood in Denny's eye.

"How dare you hold us up like that?" he stormed.

Now Denny might as well have tried to move the rock of Gibraltar as to dislocate one of the Reverend Blaisdel's opinions. Little Janie, too, looked uneasy, though she was limp from laughter. The cook, who had quietly left the room, returned with two large suitcases.

"Luggage's ready," she announced.

"Go ahead with the ceremony!" cried the exasperated groom-elect.

"Never!" ejaculated Parson Blaisdel.

"Come with me to the County Clerk's office and prove your identity," advised the undertaker.

It was a rueful Denny who explained: "The clerk was closing up just as I left his office. And he lives two miles out on the edge of town—may not even be at home. We've just forty-five minutes in which to catch that eastbound train."

Mr. Smith, the undertaker, smiled. I saw he did not believe one word Denny had said. Janie put on her coat and hat, and adjusted her veil.

"Come, Denny, we'll go without the ceremony," she said.

"Not as long as I'm on deck," declared her prospective husband.

"You'll not leave town until after the investigation," said old Blaisdel sternly.

"Give me that license!" howled Dennis.

Seeing that there was trouble ahead I drew myself to my full height—six feet three.

"I—will—not!" was drawled in unministerial taunt.

Recklessly Dennis fell upon him. Old Blaisdel spluttered and wriggled. I could see he was no weakling himself. They both lost their tempers—both talked too much. Truly, it was an undignified spectacle. All at once they became infuriated—going at each other hammer and tongs. Why, the Kilkenny kitties were purring affinities compared with that yowling, snarling pair. It certainly began to look like the survival of the fittyist. At last Den threw his antagonist, and, pinioning Blaisdel's hands, eagerly searched his pockets.

Just here the undertaker, who had been uneasily refereeing the match, interposed angrily. But I stepped between him and the struggling two. Mr. Smith looked me over, realized I was much the larger man, and then listened to what I had to say.

"I was captain of our Varsity team," I suavely told him. "And," with a careless waggle of my right foot, "one move from you, my meddling friend, will bring about an historic touchdown."

With that he took French leave. I drew a sigh of relief. We two could manage the old one all right; if necessary, leave him bound and in charge of James and Maria while we sped to the office of the justice of the peace. But by the time Blaisdel was completely overpowered and Denny had the license safe within his own coat pocket, we had lost ten more minutes. That left us a brief thirty-five. I grabbed the baggage as Denny hurried Miss Deane toward the door.

But we had reckoned without the undertaker. There were footsteps upon the porch—the hall door was thrown violently open. We found the exit barred by a giant policeman, the young embalmer, and a burly spectacled person with a medicine case. The kid undertaker waived the formality of introductions.

"I don't know which one is to blame, or whether both are out of their minds, but you'd better bring all of them along," he remarked to the officer.

"Come with me," said the representative of order and justice. "Sorry to arrest the young lady, likewise, but law's law."

"Oh, damnation!" I groaned.

"Someone'll suffer for this," Dennis Dickover ground out. "See here, Officer—"

"No words, young fellow. The doctor here'll give you something to quiet your nerves—and we'll see the young lady doesn't marry the one who's gone bug-house."

"It's only a matter of a little time," soothed the medicine-man. "Perhaps all may yet be satisfactorily adjusted."

"Time!" moaned the captured groom-elect. "I've *got* to take that six-thirty train."

"Well, well, my lads," and Doc patted us each on the shoulder. "Come along peaceably. There's nothing to do but settle this matter in the courts."

"I'll settle him," choked Denny, shaking a belligerent fist in old Blaisdel's face.

Thus chaperoned, our wedding party entered the patrol automobile and whizzed wildly through the darkening streets. At the police station we were met by a curious grinning throng. A long procession of newsboys followed us into the court room, like pages.

No music, no flowers.

"With what offence do you charge these prisoners?" inquired the puzzled judge in a ponderous voice.

"An attempt to get married," answered the disconsolate groom-elect.

"Theft and battery," was the Reverend Mr. Blaisdel's postscript. "That lunatic threw me, a minister of the gospel, and stole the license."

The attending officers grinned audibly. More street urchins crowded the doorway. A reporter, note book in hand, moved nearer to get a better view of our faces. Shielding my own countenance with my hat, I stepped between him and Miss Deane. The newspaper man again changed his position. I followed suit. After repeating this maneuvre several times I asked him if it were to be a waltz or the turkey-trot.

"Order!" thundered the judge. "Marriage," continued the bench in such deep impressive tones that even the deaf man heard, "is an old, an honorable institution. I believe in it."

"So do we," answered the now much embarrassed undertaker. "But these two men wished to marry the same woman, or rather one suddenly changed his mind in favor of the other. They acted in an insane manner."

"The law," said His Honor sternly, "has no jurisdiction over a woman's choice. There'd be fewer divorces if it had. And if a lady is attractive enough to have two suitors, that's no ground for having her arraigned in court."

"But she can't legally marry one man on a license issued to another!" snapped the now perspiring Reverend Mr. Blaisdel.

The reporter's hand flew madly along the pages of his note book. I wanted to wipe that silly smile off his face. Poor old Den was the picture of black despair. He put his arm around Janie, who was now crying softly. Her tears were our salvation. Even the judge looked deeply moved.

"Give me that license," he demanded. Denny handed it to the desk sergeant, who delivered it to the scowling bench. I was beginning to feel that law is greater than religion.

"Dennis Dickover, prove your identity," was the command.

My friend looked wildly about. It was fifteen minutes to train time. Suddenly from the rear of the crowd, an old man stepped forward. He was janitor of the police station.

"He's Mr. Dickover, Yer Honor," he vouched. "I hev knowed 'im since he wuz a kid knee high to er duck. I uster work for his father."

"Miss Deane," said the judge, "which one of these two men do you wish to marry?"

"I've—b—been—engaged—to Den—Mr. Dickover—for—two years!" sobbed little Janie.

"But you've a right to change your mind about that," said His Honor compassionately. "If you prefer the other man, the law can cancel this license and issue a new one."

"Oh—oh—I want *him!*" implored the poor girl clinging appealingly to her fiancé's arm.

"Then, prisoners of the bar," ordered the judge, "step to the center of the room."

"Your Honor," I pleaded, "they've just twelve minutes in which to catch that eastbound Limited. And Mr. Dickover will lose his inheritance if he misses—"

That judge then rose to the occasion. The words came so fast from his lips, they seemed to tumble out and fairly chase each other across the room and down the street. It was the briefest, most animated marriage ceremony I ever witnessed. Denny was placing the wedding ring on his bride's finger as we were rushed by the sergeant out of the court room and into the patrol wagon. With wild cheers and the heartiest congratula-

tions I ever heard we vanished down Main Street, and we reached the depot just as the conductor on the Sunset Limited was calling, "All aboard!"

"The only thing I regret," I said to the happy, breathless couple upon the platform, " is that the moving picture people weren't on hand to record the farewell expression on the face of our officious, unofficiating clergyman. And I think, Mrs. Dickover," turning to the laughing bride, "that in case old Denny wins the inheritance, I'll sue you for alimony."

# All For Five Cents

BY LEO CRANE

*Moving Picture Quigg loved his art better than the truth and thereby hangs a tale. A blasé public demanded something new in film thrills. Quigg meets a pack of real Indians and two companies of militia. Stop guessing what happened. Quigg got a great film.*

IT is quite possible that the early morning train was a few minutes late , but whether on schedule time or not, the fat man, who might have been a commercial traveler or a promoter of mining stock, and who was driven up to the deserted little station at a furious gait, was a few minutes later. He glanced dubiously up and down the track.

"Think I've missed that train?" he asked the boy driver.

"Mebbe," replied the boy, "an' then again, mebbe not."

"Nothing doing at this siding until afternoon, you say?"

"No more trains till then," said the boy.

"Well! I guess you'd better sling out that stuff. Go careful, Bud, like you act when handling eggs back on the farm."

The boy clambered over the seat and cautiously lifted out, one at a time, half a dozen small black cases. The fat man stowed these on the platform, tossed the boy a quarter, and sat down on his possessions.

"You goin' to wait for that next train, Mister?" asked the boy.

"I'm rooted here until something arrives," answered the fat man, whose whole nature seemed to have warped during the night. "If you see a train, tell it I'll be peevish shortly."

The boy stared at him in a sort of bovine amazement, then clucked to his horse and drove away. The man settled down to watch the parallel rails that marked the yellow clay of the cut. Fifteen minutes of this convinced him that he had missed the early morning train, and he uttered the first sound since his last words to the boy.

It is entirely unnecessary to repeat here what he said.

When the sun grew warm upon him, he seemed to soften a trifle in spirit. He was that sort of fat man which cannot remain perturbed for any great length of time. Believing that no train could sneak past him, he rested back against the station wall and slept.

When next he awoke, his first glance at the track revealed to him that something was approaching. It approached with a methodical regularity, an almost sullen persistence. The fat man could understand this, even when the advance was yet a good ways off. He had recognized the unsatisfactory pace used in walking cross-ties.

Sometime later a second man sank wearily down on the end of the platform, and, after bestowing on the first a most reproachful look, as if charging the fat man with all his misfortunes, thrust his chin into his hands, sighed, and hunched himself down in that spineless attitude suggesting utter disgust and having for its subject the whole scheme of nature.

The newcomer did not resemble an ordinary vagabond of the road but rather a curious individual who had recently come upon hard times. He wore a

check suit, with the trouser bottoms turned up to show their fringes at a new angle, and his lurid tie had a pin in it that suggested wealth if not taste. In appearance he was lean of jaw, keen-eyed, quick glancing, and evidently cynical; an entirely incongruous object to meet in the yellow mud of a Middle West railroad cutting.

"I missed the train too," said the fat man, cheerfully.

"Speak for yourself," returned the other. "I didn't."

"Tramping it?" inquired the fat man, meaning to be sociable.

"No! Inspecting the line from the president's observation car. See?"

The fat man did not see, but he refused to be silent. "What's the trouble?"

"Distance—it's agin me. See?"

Perhaps the fat man's expansive smile brightened the unfortunate, anyway, he rattled on in explanation, expressing and impressing each observation, declaration or exclamation with "See." It served his sentences as the caboose serves a freight train. But there was no monotony in his frequent use of the word. Its flexibility was wonderful. He caused it to reflect polite inquiry, astonishment, doubt, confidence, conviction. It identified and lent tone to the otherwise subtle quip. It was emphasis, punctuation, and often it replaced the oaths of other men. And finally, it marked him as one of the irrepressible four million. He did not need a card. He had only to finish a sentence to bestir those emotions responding to the sullen roar of the wheels and the kinetoscopic flash of the white pillars, and the snarl of the guard as he calls "Forty-second street! Move lively! Let 'em out! Mind the step!"

Yet, here he was in the flesh, ornamenting a railroad siding where the schedule was twice in twenty-four hours. He leaned back and cradled his knee in his hands.

"M'name's O'Hagan, see!—an' back in the big town I'm wise to everything comin' off between the Bridge an' Poe's Cottage at Fordham. But here, see!" he loosened one hand to wave it deprecatingly at the yellow mud, "I don't fit with the lan'scape. I enter with a road company, a number two an' then some, see?—actin' as box-office guy for the cherub that's backing it; but he sickened of his contract, see, which leaves me wit'out a job to get sick of. May be you need a special man. I'm a Suggester of Ideas!"

The fat man grinned.

"I guess I'm one of the lads who are skidding your angel friend out of the running," he announced, as if somewhat proud of himself. "My name's Quigg. The boys call me 'Movin' Picture Quigg,' which title ought to let you in on the ground floor. I'm out here to get a set of films for the 'Walk right in, Gents; only five cents!' circuit, but the folks up country disappointed me. Now you're on. Suggest a picture not over a billion miles away, and I'm here with the transportation. Get busy."

"I call yeh, see!" snapped the other, instantly.

"Take your time," cautioned the fat one, "I'm from a Missouri family, and you've got to show me the government stamp before I open."

He strolled leisurely back to his outfit and seated himself with an air of calm conviction; but to his surprise the gentleman of the shrewd face and ambient neckwear was in the act of seating himself on the adjacent case.

"It's up to you, friend," said O'Hagan, with a jerk of his hand that meant finality. "Whenever a show in this territory plays to a snowstorm house three nights, there's a reason. See? The answer is that the folks are somewheres else. Back through the woods is a government reserve, where the ancient and honorable red men exist without fear of invasion."

The fat man yawned plaintively.

"You can't grasp the motive all at once, see; but it'll break through your darkened dome later. Now when I came through that country recent, the big chiefs and the squaws and the little Piutes, down to old man Heap Much Feathers who's in his second childhood an' blind, are all beating it. For where, you ask? And I reply, to the fair. Wake up, an' take notice! These Indian gatherings are not like the kind back in Hagerstown, Maryland. An Injun fair has some class to it. Did yeh ever see a whoop-la Injun dance?"

The fat man betrayed greater evidences of weariness than before.

"I can see distinct," he said, rudely, "why your show failed. It had moss on it, and every time the leading lady moved, she creaked. Say! Everything you've suggested is as aged as Aaron. Come forward! Get into the future!"

The other paid him no attention, but the gleam in his eye promised revelation.

"Also, see! close to the place where this exhibit of garden-truck is being held, is a battlefield. The Indians met up with the army at that same place. Now for a plug of tobacco apiece, they'll perform their ancient amusements, showin' the exact way scalps were once garnered, and—"

The fat man inserted one pudgy finger between the flesh of his neck and the lay-down collar surrounding it, and gave that peculiar pulling rub at the linen, showing at once his annoyance and warmth.

"Do you know—" began his reply; but O'Hagan kept on.

"Over in Portsmouth, see! which is a rising young city, see! are two companies of militia with new uniforms just issued. They're proud of themselves. They'll do for the massacred."

The fat man writhed about and nearly wept.

"It's been done a million times," he choked, and his thick hands twitched as if he would like to tear something.

"But this hasn't been done, see," said the shrewd one, edging closer and whispering into the fat man's ear.

The information he imparted changed the other surprisingly. From an irritated purple his face lightened until its color was normal; his eyes, which had been puckered with rage, gleamed happily; his features smoothed and expanded as a luscious smile flooded them. He began to chuckle. Benevolence seemed to ooze from under his shaking arms and spread upward until it crowned his bald head. When he was able to pronounce words, he turned to the other, and with a sighing gasp said:

"Brother! you're the goods."

After which, they stretched out in the sunshine and plotted the campaign. The afternoon train carried them northward, and to the observant onlooker it seemed that these two had known each other many fulsome years.

It does not require much urging to revert the American aborigine to his ancient ways, for to begin with he is of the firm belief that the old order is best, notwithstanding his patient effort to adapt himself to a new set of conditions. The warriors are not all dead, and next to cavorting in a ghost dance the young men like to smell powder. They joyfully embrace an opportunity to renew old customs.

The days of real warring are past, and the meaning of warpaint and feathers with them; but the traditions must live somehow, and mimic show is better than nothing.

Childishness of this sort is not confined to the races of color. Consider two companies of militia to which have been issued spick and span uniforms, with no celebration in sight and the annual en-

campment months ahead. Imagine their impatience to array themselves, to earn the admiration of the multitude, to gratify that undying spark of barbarism which Nature allots to every one of us, and of which the white race has vainly tried to be ashamed.

Now this was the situation when Moving Picture Quigg and his chance adviser, who signed his name "See O'Hagan," arrived on the scene and proceeded to control events. They had an argument along with them. The famous river fight must be preserved, they declared. Notwithstanding that a regiment of newspaper feature writers had embalmed it, that thousands of Sunday afternoons had been filled with it, and that a score of veterans remained alive solely to talk of it, no such chance to fix its glories in pictorial form should be lost. The opportunity was precious. Here were some of the very redmen who had fought, assisted by several thousands more who, though born a trifle late, were ready and willing to lend color; here were two brave companies of martial militia, just served with uniforms splendid enough to grace any event; and here, finally, were Moving Picture Quigg and See O'Hagan, noted for their interest in anything moving and pictorial. With such words they ingratiated themselves and secured the necessary permission to get busy. This was all they wanted, and in return for it they promised to carry the fame of that agricultural fair into every quarter of the land. All of which they did.

Moving Picture Quigg, wearing his most astute and persuasive manner, engineered this section of the program. He cited every notable effort to preserve legendary customs, how the government labored to restore old ruins, how science was encouraged to delve amid the secrets of pottery and picture-writing and 'dobe construction, how men of wealth financed writers and painters and sent them into the work, how exhibits and lectures and books and pictures all sought to illuminate the one-time glories of the real Americans. But his effort, coming last of all, would be a triumph. He assured the gentlemen in charge, gave his word in fact, and was believed. But at no time, and to no one of the parties concerned, did he mention what it was that See O'Hagan had whispered in his ear several mornings previous.

Meantime, the advisory member of the expedition was busy. He had loaded his pockets with large round silver dollars, and whenever in the vicinity of braves gave liberal evidence of his generosity.

Between them they proclaimed to the officer of the troops that a spread and dance would follow the mock battle. Their sweethearts were invited. The railroad company arranged to have a special train to carry the heroes back to their native city when the goodnight waltz had been played. Moving Picture Qiugg's good humor and philanthropy dazzled everyone. No one could understand it, until rumor wafted that he represented a wealthy department store in the East, owned by a gentleman who had spent a fortune in historical research. This Moving Picture Quigg did not deny.

Those of us who have paid our five-cent pieces to the lady in the glass cage, and have passed inside the Red Moon Theater to see the battle of Lame Horse Creek whirred onto the screen, can fully appreciate the efforts of the committee of arrangements. We, who have had this pleasure for five cents only, would not lose the result for worlds. It is one of the most gorgeous pieces of realism on the moving picture circuit, and from Bangor, Maine, to Tombstone, Arizona, the managers of the stucco-fronts, where the stunning looking lady fingers her rat languidly and takes your money, simply howl for it to be returned. The reputation of Moving Picture Quigg had been

earned in the past, but this string of film cemented it forever. So long as there exists one stucco-front, however weather-worn, so long as there remains one barker, one lady in a glass cage, one sad-grinding melodeon, the name of Moving Picture Quigg will be remembered. And while Quigg draws his breath will he be indebted to the train that went off without him, and the track that brought See O'Hagan plodding to his side; for this same O'Hagan had the idea, and Quigg had the apparatus, and they both had the nerve, which is a combination seldom found among men.

But why, may be asked, did these promoters engage a stout buckboard and the fastest team of horses in the state. Why did they study time-tables and bribe the reckless driver to catch a certain nifty eastbound train. These preliminary precautions proceeded out of a peculiar sanity with which both were endowed. Those who have it not are often the receiving guests of a necktie party in the West. They knew they would be wanted after the first act.

And those who have paid the aforesaid five cents, and have passed into the Red Moon Theater, understand.

The morning of the eventful day dawned with a clarity of atmosphere that promised a calm radiance in the later hours. The sky presented a blue screen studded with slow-moving, white-cheeked clouds. A cheerful sun spread its glow gently over all the valley, and a breeze stirred the wild growth of the plain on which the battle would occur.

Now came the trains and the people, a holiday crowd, bearing lunch baskets, sniffing the fresh odor of the fields and seeming glad to be alive. They gave the soldiers a round of cheers, and when the band played, its stirring measures swayed the throng visibly.

Now the troops, and a prouder lot never stepped, debarked from the coaches, and with a "We are coming, Father Abraham" step, marched to the camp to fraternize with their ancient enemies. There was something of stalwart determination in the appearance of these soldiers, a do or die effect, that impressed everyone. And were not the eyes of the folks upon them? Were not the many sweethearts, six to a man, brighteyed, beribboned, and smiling, watching? Who would not have felt his heart leap, and who would not have simulated a warlike dignity?

On the other hand, a curious multitude animated the camp of the Indians. A riot of color gave it the semblance of a kaleidoscope held against the sun. The noise of war was in the air, and barbaric sounds assaulted the ear without producing that chill of horror which has made the old days so unique. Tom-toms were beating, horses neighed shrilly, weapons gleamed in the sunlight. A thousand bronzed warriors, brilliantly arrayed and ornamented, their feathers nodding in the wind, their cheeks striped with vermilion and blue, strode about in heroic manner. And though these scions of the tribe of Broken Nose welcomed the troopers in a fitting manner, there showed at times something of disdain in their bearing. The old chiefs carried themselves majestically, for theirs was the part to portray the generation which had so nearly passed. And slipping here and there, like a ferret, went See O'Hagan, diplomatically seeking the company of the interpreters, the last of a rouleau of silver coins clinking in his generous hands.

In order that everything would operate with great effect, Moving Picture Quigg made a speech to the braves and the troops, reviewing the former battle plan and mapping proper evolutions for this one. The Indians were to charge up to a certain point, which he indicated, and then were to retreat in disorder, evidencing

dismay and chagrin; the troops were to repel them heroically, firing many volleys. Also certain Indians were to fall prone to the ground, remaining there inert, simulating death; and the reasonable proportion of soldiers were to do likewise. And finally a squad of troops that had been held in reserve must come up gallantly, whereupon the Indians must fly, emitting at the same time shrill howls of disgust and rage and making specific manifestations of disappointment.

All this was made plain to the braves by the interpreters, and See O'Hagan somehow managed to be very close up, as usual.

Then the soldiers formed and hiked for the slight barricade that had been thrown up on a hillock at the end of the great field; and with much noise and bustle the braves mounted, surging like a sea toward their appointed position, which was out of sight of the barricade in a dip of the plain. Each man of them carried, in addition to his rifle, a "coo" stick. This is a short staff with which the warrior tags his fallen enemy, and signifies that he is dead. Some of the chiefs carried "coo" sticks which showed many notches, for the "coo" stick is also a calendar of those tagged in reality, and in bygone years some of these gentlemen in feathers had not played at mimic war.

When the bustle quieted, like the hush before the break of a sudden storm, the picture men sought a position to the right of the entrenchments. They had mounted the camera on the bed of the buckboard, so they were also very close to the pair of fast horses and the reckless driver mentioned. From their elevated point of vantage, the charge of the warriors would have a straight-on effect. It should be stated also that to the left of the hillock, though this had not been considered as effecting the strategic value of the place, grew an extensive patch of briars. The patch had grown luxuriantly and long, as if reserving its strength for a definite mission in life.

Moving Picture Quigg inquired of the driver if his team was well in hand, for, he explained, something might occur which would necessitate rapid movement.

"If them hosses founder, I'll have something to say to you, see?" was the remark of See O'Hagan to the owner of the buckboard.

"And there's fifty dollars in it if you catch that train. If you don't catch it, you'll likely lose your money," added Quigg significantly.

"All ready, there?" he called to the soldiers, and then somewhat anxiously he gave the signal. A bugle sounded. A furious tom-toming answered it from the distance, and a wild devil-may-care yell arose.

"They're off!" cried Moving Picture Quigg, watching the rise and whirling the crank of the photographic outfit.

"Five to one on the red!" muttered O'Hagan. And then he whispered to the driver: "Friend, are yeh sure them hosses ain't asleep?"

"What'n'lls comin' off, anyhow?" snapped the nervous pilot of the team. "What d'yeh mean by askin' me that, forty times a minute?"

"Nothin', see," said O'Hagan, spitting copiously over the side. "Only this here affair, see,—is goin' to be a mistake, —see?"

A second later the line of hilltop against the sky seemed alive with men and horses. As from the very soil they sprang into view, a thousand of them. For an instant they seemed to quiver, to vibrate on the crest. Then sounded such a yell as had not been heard since the days when the Mountain Crows and the River Crows and the Apaches had met in a scalp feast. On they came, a torrent of men and horses, sunlighted, rain-bow colored, pennons and feathers flaunting madly; the earth quaking be-

neath the four thousand stabbing hoofs, the bedlam of a wondrous charge predominating. Now the rifles cracked, and the smoke of firing arose, and the odor of burned powder saluted the nostrils. On they came, riding like devils, straight on; and the soldiers worked their ammunition overtime.

Now the Indians neared the mark of dismay. Like a great wave the ponies swept down on that place where the check must occur and the retreat begin, and the howls of disgust and the manifestations of disappointment and defeat be made. Nearer and nearer they came to this crucial point. And then they passed it, mobbed over it, pell-mell. Something had happened! They had forgotten it!

And suddenly the onlookers realized that this was to be far different from the former Lame Horse fight. This time a promoter had been at work. The Indians did not stop, they were not dismayed; they kept right on. It was a splendid demonstration of the value of blank cartridges. Into the smoke went the ponies, and with a chorus of yells the red riders dismounted. A puff of wind blew off the screen hiding them, and it could be seen that these Indians, a braver generation, educated and without fear, were going right up to the breastworks.

"Here you! go back!" shrieked the commanding officer.

"Tell them fools to fire higher!" wailed one of the heroes.

But there was no one to check the braves. Moving Picture Quigg had his work cut out with the camera and as for See O'Hagan, he seemed to enjoy the tumult. His grin grew broader and still broader, while two sympathetic rivulets of brown streamed from the corners of his working mouth.

Now the braves had scaled the wall, now they were inside the lines. A hand to hand fight commenced. The blank cartridges worked continuously and frightfully close to the splendid uniforms. Black smudges began to show where blood ought to have been. The melee would be hidden and then the smoke screen riven by the wind. At these moments the engagement stood out as clear and distinct as any camera man could wish. The lens followed every movement, the shutter clicked as if it were delighted.

But on went the battle. Commands were of no effect. The "coo" sticks began to work as the soldiers were downed. Their guns gone, the weapons provided by Nature proved unavailing. A score of them could be seen grappling with the painted devils. Now they were being dragged forth by the heels; now they shrieked for assistance; now with a rush, jouncing along, dragging, they went straight for the patch of luxurious briars.

It was a sad sight, this revival of lusty revenge, accompanied by the hellish jocularity of the half-redeemed savage. Sometimes a struggling group would pause long enough to discharge their revolvers close, very close, to a writhing pair of beautifully braided pantaloons, and then on would go the owner thereof, kicking and squirming, on to the briar patch. What a scene, baffling description, as the victors slammed their victims into and through and under and over the bed of resisting thorns. The sounds of disorder increased. The relief squad did not come up—they knew better. The cause was lost. Something had twisted the program. This was no replica of the Lame Horse Creek battle. This was neither a massacre nor a farce. There was no honor in it. It was a mockery.

And Moving Picture Quigg, his eye glinting and his jaw set, turned to See O'Hagan with a sibilant remark:

"It's time we were tearing ourselves away from here," he said.

"Won't we wait for the dance, see?" inquired the other, horrified.

"There ain't goin' to be no dance! Start them hosses, an' hold on for life."

Then the buckboard gave a lurch, and the wheels of it scattered gravel, and the inhabitants thereof gritted their teeth and held on grimly. Behind them the noise of conflict continued, and though it grew dim there lived in it to the last a note of savage victory.

That night, as the train sped along, See O'Hagan leaned back comfortably and puffed out a cloud of smoke.

"We oughter stayed to entertain them soldiers," he said regretfully, "I clean forgot it."

Moving Picture Quigg eyed him dubiously and then growled:

"That's the way with shiftless man, forgetting his duties and the fine details of things. Now I've been in this business a long time, and I don't forget the essentials. I knew them boys wouldn't be in no mood for dinner, nor dancing, so I sent a politely worded invitation to every doctor in the township. I said that added to the joy of the celebration would possibly be a need for professional service. You know it takes a sight of doctors to pick out briars, and lotion gunpowder burns. I don't know anything that requires more technical patience, do you?"

At this point See O'Hagan gasped admiringly:

"Quigg! If it weren't for what I told them Injuns, I'd take off my hat to you."

Moving Picture Quigg smiled blandly.

"To get the film, tell 'em anything," he hummed to himself.

# Luke McLuke Says

The man who wants the first row in a theatre is usually found in the last row in church.

Culture doesn't help a girl any when she has prickly heat.

A girl who is easily shocked is always around when anything shocking occurs.

There isn't a word in Fox's Book of Martyrs about a fat woman who is wearing a straight front.

A man with a large husky wife admires slender willowy dames. And the man with the slender willowy wife admires large husky women.

You can never make a girl believe that a heavy union suit will keep her as warm as a set of furs.

Sometimes the bride gets so nervous that she forgets to cross her fingers when she promises to "obey."

Eugenics means that when you mate two catfish you can't expect a flock of little goldfishes.

A corn fed shape will do more to get a girl a husband than a college education.

The bearded ladies are not all in the side shows.

A man who forgets to kiss his own wife will take a chance on getting shot to kiss another man's wife.

Mother always sees smiling faces at the breakfast table when she looks at the cereal advertisements in the magazines.

If a girl's bust is thick enough she can't get a waist thin enough.

When a woman has to wear a long coat in hot weather the other women get highly indignant.

The present styles may have their faults. But a man who marries a bow-legged girl can't say later on that he didn't know what he was getting.

After taking a look at the women these days a man always wonders why they ever imagined that they needed bustles.

"Ultra decolleté" is high brow for "half naked."

You can never tell how large a girl's hips are from the way her skirt fits her corset.

A married man knows that the perfume other women use smells better than the kind his wife uses.

Women sometimes forget their rubbers on rainy days, but the men never do.

You can get used to anything, even water.

Before marriage two's company and three's a crowd. After marriage two's a crowd and three's company.

Advertising always pays, unless you advertise for a wife.

Beauty is only skin deep, but curves is curves.

An old house looks better with a fresh coat of paint, but it is different with an old woman.

A married woman never knows when there is a hole in her husband's socks. But she beats him to the knowledge that there is a hole in his pocket.

When a girl wobbles when she laughs a man can think of a lot of funny stories.

# The Shark

BY JOHN FLEMING WILSON

*Here's a yarn from Honolulu that's a thriller. Axel Gustafsen, deep-sea diver, quarrels with his boss and calls him "shark," the most hated word in a sea diver's vocabulary. Later the vengeful boss, with a gallon of fresh beef's blood,—here we are spoiling the story for you. Go to it yourself. (Don't read this one late at night.)*

"LL get you yet!" whined Tom Flint, known along Honolulu waterfront as "Skin" Flint, and he wrung his injured fingers. Axel Gustafsen, deep-sea diver and now indignant employee of Flint's, smiled faintly and called down from the wharf's edge to a man to bring up the air hose. Then he turned to Flint with an ugly gleam in his blue eyes.

"I told you when I took this job that I needed the best and costliest gear when I'm working at such depths. You buy the cheapest you can get. It does not stand thirty feet pressure. Luckily it didn't drown me. Now either give me the coin for a new, good air hose or—"

"Looky here," said Flint, stilling his wrath, "that's a good hose and—"

Axel's heavy hand wasn't quick enough. But he snatched the long coil of white rubber hose from his helper and flung the thing in Flint's face, knocking him down. Then, without another word, he strode away. He came back a moment later to say quietly and grimly, "Sharks like you don't hand *me* anything. Now you can get some one else to risk his life in your rotten suits."

When Skin Flint figured up the day's work that night he discovered that a saving of $16.72 on the air hose he supplied Axel Gustafsen would cost him the exact sum of $2000, the forfeit he had put up for the fulfilment of his contract with the Island Steamship Company for the recovery of certain goods on the sunken steamer *Maori*. The wreck lay in ninety feet of water and there was no other diver nearer than San Francisco who would undertake such a job at double the price Axel Gustafsen had contracted for.

Within the weedy body of Skin Flint was a weedy soul, filled with small and noxious growths. And the soil was ripe for another. In his last words the diver had unconsciously sown the seed.

Three weeks did Flint brew over the wrong Gustafsen had done him. True, the hose had parted; but all hose is liable to accidents. It had cost money, too. And in his miserable heart he suspected that the diver had exaggerated the depth at which the *Maori* lay. That would be merely business. Then why didn't Axel do business in a business fashion? Flint still gnawed his aching fingers and slowly there grew into his mind a thought.

He went up on the train to Pearl Harbor and hired a sampan to take him outside. There, rocking on the easy swells, Skin Flint did some strange fishing while the Japanese crew drowsed under the dirty awning. They were somewhat surprised to see that their employer had buoyed his heavy fish line and that the wooden mark was floating as if there were a heavy weight on the other end.

The next day Skin Flint hired the same sampan and returned to where the buoy still rose and fell. Once more he fished, this time with a five-pound piece of raw pork. He caught a twelve-foot shark

and ordered the men to row back into the harbor, where he gave them the big fish for nothing. He returned to Honolulu with his head drawn down between his peaked shoulders and a smile on his pale lips.

"Working on a contract up this way?" asked the train conductor carelessly.

"Yes," said Flint, his smile changing into a grin.

The next day he sought Axel Gustafsen and opened the conversation by saying promptly: "Gustafsen, I have a job for you, you to furnish your own suit and gear, which I'll pay for."

The diver considered him thoughtfully a moment. Flint tried to look amiable and good natured.

"What's the job?"

"I was doing some survey work outside Pearl Harbor," the contractor replied. "Lost a thousand-dollar case of instruments with all my notes and figures. I've seen a buoy about where I think it went down. About forty feet of water there."

"I suppose you want the case brought up before the water spoils everything?"

"Tomorrow?"

Flint's eyes shone. "Good! And I hope you won't bear hard feelings."

"That depends whether you pay me five hundred for the job or not," was the indifferent reply.

"That'll include your gear?"

Gustafsen rose and stretched his big arms. "I have my own, now," he said carelessly. "My own boat and my own men. Start at six o'clock in the morning?"

"Sure. I'll take the train and go out in a small boat and point the place out," Flint responded. "I'll be much obliged."

"All right. I'll bring the case of things down here and you hand me a check for five hundred and I'll hand over your property."

For the third time the sampan, carrying Flint, crept out through the shining reaches of Pearl Harbor and toward the spot where the little buoy bobbed on the waves. The contractor could see the diving boat slowly coming in under the impulse of her sweeps. There was no wind. Skin Flint nodded to the Japanese to let the boat lie, and he peered over the side into the lucid depths. Far below he could barely see the white glimmer of the bottom. He strained his eyes, and his lips were compressed to bloodlessness as he searched the water. Last of all he quietly allowed to drop over the boat's gunwale a heavy sack filled with raw meat. He followed its course downward. His eyes gleamed. For shadows gathered about it and there was a glint of another grey whiteness than that of the coral bottom, and the shadows thickened and moved and little swirls of water turned on the oily surface. Then the shadows vanished. The sack was gone. A torn speck of canvas flitted upward and finally floated at the top. Flint picked it up and the smile on his lips widened. Then he lay back and waited for the diving boat to come up.

When it was within hailing distance Flint rose and shouted, pointing to the wooden buoy that rose and fell with an almost imperceptible motion a hundred feet away.

"That's your buoy, is it?" asked Axel Gustafsen.

"Yes, it was about there," was the reply.

The diver glanced indifferently over at it and nodded to one of his Japanese helpers, who promptly picked up a hand lead and proceeded to sound the depth of the water while Gustafsen kicked off his shoes and prepared to get into his suit.

"What kind of a looking affair is it?" he demanded when he was ready for the big helmet.

Flint leaned eagerly over the side of his sampan. "It was about five feet long

and a foot square," he said in a shaking voice. "It is brass cornered."

Axel turned to the man with the sounding lead.

"Seven fathom, sah."

"Well, I'll just work around and find it," the diver returned.

A moment later he had let himself down off the ladder and was gone in a swirl of foam, while two men worked the air pump and the other two held air hose and life line. As he descended, the contractor caught the flash of his big knife tied to one wrist, and his lids narrowed over his eyes. Then he worked with incredible swiftness over a thin linen sack that lay at his feet. Into it he dropped a heavy iron weight and then set in it an open gallon can filled with a red fluid —fresh beef's blood. As he worked he glanced at his men to see if they observed him. They gave no sign. When he had finished he held the open mouth of the sack in one clenched hand and directed his men to pull towards the buoy.

A couple of sweeps of the paddles thrust his small craft almost to it. His crew stopped its progress fifty feet from the diving boat, then Flint slowly leaned over the gunwale and peered down.

There was a white glimmer of the bottom and a circular shadow moving towards him. The diver was at work. The glint of his ready knife flickered now and then. And as Flint stared down he seemed to see other shadows at some distance. At last the diver's shadow was directly under his eyes. He drew a quick breath and with a soft, stealthy heave of his lean arm he lifted the linen sack over and let it slip into the water. It descended swiftly and a little crimson-black thread marked its passage.

He saw the sack strike the shadow that was Axel Gustafsen and instantly there was a flicker of the knife. Flint leaned farther out. Other shadows were gathering. Then a dark cloud enveloped the shadow that was the diver and as if from a great distance Skin Flint heard a shout from the other boat and a rapid order. But he had no eyes for anything but the shadows below him. He saw the whole mass slowly rise, but the black cloud enveloped it and he laughed.

"Blood!" he muttered. "He cannot see to strike with his knife."

The men on the diving boat yelled, and he heard the creak of the life line in the hoisting sheave. But the shadow was now a cloud of storm. Foam was rising from it and streams of darkness that made the contractor wring his fingers and say over and over again, "Blood! Blood!"

Then a great gray body leaped in the water, followed by other grey bodies, and now the madman's lips muttered, "Shark! Shark! You called *me* a shark! The shark got *you!*"

And he leaned still farther over, wiping his hands on his silk handkerchief while the men in both boats beat on the surface of the foaming water with their oars and yelled terribly.

Then a long, gray pillar rose from the cloud and Flint saw the great mouth of a shark as it flung itself up. Its prow-like nose was aimed directly for him. "Shark!" he muttered dazedly. And in his enormous passion he dipped exultant hands into the water.

The leaping body seized his arms and with one sweep of its powerful tail dragged him out of the boat, downwards.

And the men on the two boats that floated on the stained water stared into the crimson-black depths stolidly, while the little wooden buoy leaped on the swirls. Presently a silk handkerchief appeared. It swung gently up and down as a light breeze rippled the surface. As if at a signal, the two crews set themselves to their sweeps and rowed slowly away.

# Two Phones and a Phoney Call

BY ELIZABETH MYERS

*Here a vivacious but lonely young lady with Tango aspirations sets out deliberately and "with malice aforethought" to secure the necessary partner and realize the joys of the two step. . She has her own amusing code as to the limitations of a "real lady's" advances in partner-hunting. She gets HIM which only bears out what Bernard Shaw has been telling us: the woman is the hunter and the man the hunted one in life's merry chase.*

AN early May breeze tapped insistently on winter-barred window panes and invited all to open and partake of its crisp bounty. The flat across the court accepted of the largess and drank deep gulps in feverish thirst.

In the flat opposite the flat across the court Miss Browne was imbibing of the same freshness, albeit involuntarily, for it was not in response to any spring zephyr that she had opened her window and thus sparred with imprudence for, while curiosity once killed a cat, the feline had found something of interest in the direful accomplishing, and what is a cold in the head as against the envious satisfaction derived in seeing one's neighbors enjoying themselves while we have to share our society with only printed entertainers as found in the latest sellers.

"Everybody's doin' it,—doin' what?" The torrent of machine-made music burst through the silence of the evening like a river through a leaky dam, as the gramophone in the flat opposite tore out its squeaky melody from its lacquered throat.

Miss Browne threw the book, upon which she had been vainly trying to concentrate, across the room in sheer disgust. She had registered a solemn vow that she 'hoped to die' if she ever looked across the court to the brilliantly lighted window again, and yet, when a chorus of voices in variegated keys took up the song, it was just impossible to keep her eyes in bonds, for they simply flew over to the forbidden ground at every new sound.

By leaning forward a bit she could, without being seen, watch the heaving shoulders of several couples as they turkey-trotted back and forth in pendulum-like regularity and hear the treble yells that betokened a sudden contact with the furniture and more screams and laughter in the general scramble that followed.

"Wouldn't they make you tired," she muttered, her upper lip rising in contemptuous envy. "It's fierce, me havin' to sit roun' and hear them over there."

"Oh, you be-au-ti-ful doll, you great big be-au-ti-ful doll." Miss Browne put her fingers in her ears and threw a despairing glance ceiling-ward. The folks upstairs were starting, not in opposition but in very collusion. The gramophone had given the piano a handicap of several laps but was beating it steadily by half a bar, while the stamp of feet overhead gave evidence of musical soles.

"You bet 'everybody's doin' it'—but me." Tears gathered in the unhappy eyes and spilled their salty ways down a field of non-water-proof peachbloom.

Here it was only eight-thirty and everybody enjoying himself and likely to keep on for hours, while right within call was as lively a pair of feet as ever crammed a number five foot into a four-

and-a-half shoe, just spoiling for a trot.

"Everybody's doin' it," the gramophone squeaked its encore. To sit quietly and hear the catchy, foot-inspiring melody, to feel the rhythm tingling through to one's very hairpins was nothing short of torture. Miss Browne jumped up, the fever of the dance was too infectious to resist. With feet apart, spanning her yard-wide skirt, and shoulders heaving like a ship in a heavy sea, she started around the room.

"Don't hold me so tight, Charlie," she murmured as she swagged along, her head thrown back and eyes half closed in the ecstasy of the dance. "Say but you are all to the fairies when it comes to the light fantastic."

Up and down, round and round she jogged with her imaginary partner until the canned orchestra called a halt.

"My stars," she panted as she dropped exhausted into a chair, "I guess I'm clean nutty. When a lady gets to this trim it's time she consults an alienist. I've *got* to get to a dance or I'll be on the list, sure."

It was a warning! But one can't make invitations to a dance out of hand. She had once tried to give herself a surprise party but it did not work, for she found that the girls were depending on her to supply the men, and what is a party for if one can't get to know new fellows! As it happened, Miss Browne had only two on the calling-list and they were far too precious to introduce around. And now by consulting her mental engagement pad no dance was scheduled for at least six weeks, and that was only Mame Sullivan's birthday party which was sure to be slow. If that pink satin didn't get an engagement soon it would look like a hand-me-down, especially as it had been made over twice before, and Mame was getting a Robespierre with a Gaby slash for a grand ball the Sam Smith's Association were giving. Now if only she had an invite like that, she knew she could make Mame, in spite of her fine clothes, look like the proverbial thirty cents, because no matter how much Mame dolled up you couldn't get away from the noticeable fact that she was just the same going as coming and that her switch matched her sister's hair much better than it did her own, and as for looks,—here Miss Browne tossed her head and smiled,—she wasn't afraid of the comparison. Nevertheless the fact remained that Mame had a swell date and Miss Browne had none.

The shouts of laughter from across the court once more caught her attention, so she shifted on her chair for a better view.

"Huh," she snorted as she watched the merrymakers, "I'm glad I'm not in that bunch. The way that girl in green is carrying on is something fierce. I guess she can't be much." It was small satisfaction but she took it. Again she twisted around in her chair. "Why, there's the feller that works on the eleventh floor," she commented in surprised annoyance. "Now, what do you know about that!" He was evidently enjoying himself, and immediately the market dropped several points. He had stared pretty hard at her when they had met in the elevator and she had made up her mind that the next time she ran across him she would smile, for he looked pretty good to her. But now, well, she guessed she was too much of a lady to condescend to anyone in *that* set!

So envy doth make scoffers of us all.

There was a lull in the merrymaking: the 'twenty-minute after' pause. Then on the air still vibrant with the recent strains, a note like that of a song-bird's floated up toward her open window, then another and another, each as clear as crystal until the melody was complete: "I love a lassie, a bonnie, bonnie lassie." Miss Browne sat up alert and turned

her ear window-ward. As the last note died lingeringly on the night air she leaned out. Yes, there was a light in the room below,—Mrs. McCarthy's boarder was at home!

If you were at peace with the world and the merrymakers, the fact that Mrs. McCarthy's boarder was at home would arouse slight interest, and his whistled song fall insignificantly upon your unreceptive ears, but if, on the other hand, your soul was suffering the torments of the envious and he vaguely represented the drowning-man's straw, you might, in fact you would perk up and take notice.

Mrs. McCarthy's boarder was a fairly new accession. Miss Browne remembered hearing Mrs. McCarthy shout the news up the dumb-waiter shaft a few days before. There had been a long controversy about the advisability of taking him, as a telephone would have to be put in for his convenience. It ended by the risk being taken, for as the good lady said: "Them newspaper men make good money when they make any," and , as he lit up to something more than eight candle power she guessed it wasn't so much of a chance, after all.

Now that Miss Browne's attention was centered in another direction she detected the strong odor of a pipe. There is something friendly, almost intimate, in the trail from the pipe of the man down-stairs, that is, if his brand is anyway decent, but Miss Browne, whose knowledge in the science of things odoriferous was somewhat unstable, noted only that it smacked of man full-grown and at ease. All journalists smoke pipes, she remembered, except when they use cigarettes.

In the corner where the steam pipe gave forth its early morning proclamation that the janitor was getting busy with the furnace, there was a space of about an inch and a half, so that if one were good at contortions and smart at pasting oneself against the wall, one could, at the risk of a stiff neck, focus one's left eye into the opening and see just what was going on in the southwest corner of the room below. Miss Browne was an adept in this line, so it was no novelty for her to accommodate her size to the cramped quarters.

As she peered down she caught sight of the left ear and a portion of a shaggy head above a heavily built left shoulder, all very much enveloped in smoke. That portion looked very promising; now to see the man *in toto*. Should she cough? He probably wouldn't hear her, and if he heard might pay no attention. If only Mrs. McCarthy were at home she might have ventured for a few minutes' chat, but as luck would have it she had gone to a show with Miss Browne's mother. One can't deliberately beard a gentleman in his den without at least an excuse, but if she waited for Mrs. McCarthy to furnish it she might wait a good long time, for Mrs. McCarthy wasn't the introducing kind where the gentlemen were concerned. Some people never seem to think girls want a show, and so, outside of seeing his fleeting profile in the dim hall below, there was not much chance at her ever really meeting him.

Then for Mrs. McCarthy to come and tell her how he was always having to go to shows and places,—that being part of his job,—and looking something grand in his glad rags,—well, she'd like to show Mrs. McCarthy that she didn't need *her* to do the introducing!

Now if only there was a way to get to know him. Miss Browne sat and pondered deeply. It was a case for the greatest *finesse,* as she must have good and sufficient reason for invading a bachelor's quarters at nine of the night. If she screamed at imaginary burglars, ten chances to one Mr. O'Leary, who lived

next door, would chase in with his five children tagging on to his coat-tails. And it was too risky to pretend a fire or a fit; everyone would rush in and that would be no fun, besides taking more histrionic talent than she was capable of. What should she do?

Through the din of the revellers came her answer. It was only a faint tinkle, but no call-boy ever summoned a leading lady more peremptorily to her place in the wings than did the ringing of the telephone in the room below.

As the touching of a lever sets an inert piece of machinery in motion, by some such mental process the apathetic girl was galvanized into a being of nerve and action. The lines of distress disappeared as if by magic, the delicately traced eyebrows descended from their angle of discontent, and the mouth, no longer pursed in sulky envy, broadened to its original bow shape. The drooping figure that had sat so forlornly watching the animated neighbors, became in turn animated.

"I'll just tease my hair a bit," she decided, running to the mirror and brushing the soft mass deftly over her forehead so that she looked out at the world through a golden haze. "But I musn't doll up too much," was her mental admonition, "or he'll be on."

The peachbloom, after the recent shower again restored to an even pinkness, defied the elements. Adjusting her girdle to the latest line as decreed by fickle fashion as to where the waist ought to be, she ran her hands lightly down her hips in search of possible wrinkles, then turning back her low collar until it showed a little brown mole that nestled impertinently on her pretty neck, she felt that art could do nothing more, and left her fortune in the hands of the gods as she ran lightly downstairs.

"McCarthy, Munson," she read on the door-plate. With her ear cocked for possible sounds she listened a moment before touching the bell. The thrill that ran through her at the imperative response made her heart jump to her throat, where it pulsated wildly like a frightened bird driven violently from its nest. She had the same inclination to run that she had had years ago when she had employed her after-school hours pulling door-bells, but now it was too late to make her escape for she heard steps approaching.

"My soul," she breathed in consternation, "I wish I was upstairs."

The door was opened by a collarless young man, whose hair stood spikily on end, and the signs of his trade were discernible in the ink marks that decorated his broad face. Miss Browne started back in good stage surprise.

"Oh!" she began, her eyes widening in her evident astonishment at seeing him. "Is Mrs. McCarthy in?"

The young man blocking the doorway watched her curiously.

"No, she's out," he said in a deep voice that made Miss Browne more determined to do or die.

"Anything I can do?" he questioned, smiling down at her. It was a lovely smile, and one encouraging to this mission-bent young person.

"I don't like to trouble you," she said demurely, looking modestly away. "I'll come some other time." He was not going to let her go like that, she knew, for Miss Browne saw approval in his glance, but she backed slightly, placing her hand on the banister as though preparatory to ascending.

"If you will tell me what it is, I may be able to help." There was a sort of solicitous inquiry in his tone, almost as if he feared she was really going.

Miss Browne stood uncertain, looking at him with head slightly bent as she placed one foot on the first step and smiled coyly.

"Won't you come in?" he urged, holding the door invitingly open.

"Oh no, I mustn't, really, beside I'd disturb you. I thought I heard Mrs. McCarthy talking or I wouldn't have—"

"Now, come straight in, it's all right and no disturbance at all."

"I mustn't, really," she reiterated, but entered. He was such a big young man that she felt just a little bit timid.

"You see," she began, as she seated herself comfortably in a large morris chair and watched him hastily putting on his collar, "I only wanted to 'phone my friend, Miss Sullivan, that I couldn't meet her tomorrow night. But I could just as well go out and not trouble you as you're busy."

"Why, this is a great diversion, if you only knew it," he replied. "This ink-spitting séance had me done to a crisp. Come here and 'phone all you want," he invited cordially, his frank eyes glowing their admiration.

There was a pause. She felt him regarding her intently as he leaned far back in his desk chair, his chin resting on his locked fingers. He seemed kindly disposed, so she took courage and remembered the mission in hand.

"You're Mrs. McCarthy's new boarder, aren't you?" she questioned to gain time.

"I guess I am. How do you know?"

"Oh!" she replied ingenuously, "she told Ma all about you."

"Is that so?" He leaned forward, smiling quizzically. "What kind of a character did she give me?"

"She said,—oh, lots of things," she replied evasively.

"And you are the young lady who lives upstairs, eh?"

"Why, how do you know?" she rejoined, delighted. He had noticed her!

"Oh, I know more than you suspect," he said, nodding sagely, catching sight of the mole on her neck.

"Goodness gracious, who could have told you anything about *me!* Mrs. McCarthy?" Maybe there was some good in Mrs. McCarthy after all.

"I'm not saying," he wagged a finger tauntingly at her. "She doesn't have to tell me anything; I can see."

"Oh, ain't you terrible," she giggled nervously. What an awfully nice fellow he was, and so handsome, he must look grand, rigged up; which reflection brought her to the point at issue.

"I saw the grandest show the other night," she began. "It was great. Have you seen 'The Mermaid of the Coral Isle'? Ma's gone to the Tivoli," she went on, not waiting for an answer, "with Mrs.—with a friend," she caught herself just in time. "But I don't care for sob shows, do you?"

"No, can't say that I do," he remarked offhand, settling back and studying an elusive dimple that no sooner came than it vanished in maddening fashion. "But I'm not much on shows, anyway, I've got sick of them."

This was distinctly discouraging, but Miss Browne held fast to her determination, for in spite of variable winds the forecast looked favorable.

"Mercy sakes! Think of getting sick of going to shows!" she ejaculated, aghast. "Some people would give their eye-teeth to be in your boots. Why, me and my friend, Miss Sullivan, are just crazy about them and we go to the movies sometimes as much as three times a week, that is," she amended, "when we can't get to the real things. And as for dances, say,—" her eyes glistened as she gathered all her reserve forces. It was time to fire broadsides.

"Think of that now," he said in amused wonder. "I suppose, though, when a fellow has to take those things in for business he kind of loses sight of the fact that they are pleasure joints. As for me, I generally have to think just how much space I can put the stuff into

that will carry, and what I don't get, I make up."

"You must be awful smart," she commented admiringly. It seemed so nice to hear a real reporter talking shop.

"I once had a gentleman friend that was on a paper," she said, not to be outdone. "But he got to drinking and had to quit. He was awful smart too. He used often to take me with him, but he did funerals and it wasn't always fun, besides I generally had to wait outside."

"I guess you're a good pal, all right," he remarked, eyeing her critically and moving his chair to a more conversational angle. "And I bet that fellow didn't know a good thing when he had it."

There was a momentous pause, bristling with happenings.

"I wonder now—" he started, then shook his head a little.

"What was you saying?" she questioned innocently.

"I wonder how you'd like to go to a dance that is coming off on the—let's see." He leaned over his desk and rummaged through a disordered mass of papers until a yellow card came to view.

"The Sam Smith Association is giving their annual on the 25th." Miss Browne gave forth an involuntary squeal of delight, but smothered it at its birth. "I've never been to one of them and don't quite know if it's up to much, but if you care to take a chance, why—"

"Sure, I'd love to," she interrupted, her eyes sparkling with delight.

"Well, then it's a go," he responded heartily. "That's fine."

And so the battle against the unsuspecting enemy was won and no blood spilled.

A clock in a room nearby struck ten. Miss Browne jumped up in consternation. "Why, it's ten o'clock," she declared. "Dear me, I'd no idea it was so late, I must be going." Then suddenly remembering the excuse that brought her: "I guess I can't 'phone my friend tonight, it's too late."

"That's too bad," he replied sympathetically, as he opened the hall door.

"Yes, it is," she responded. "I 'll have to wait till tomorrow, I guess. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Miss er—?" He questioned, holding out his hand.

"Miss Browne," she flashed back, placing her cool fingers in his.

"Are you ever home evenings?" he inquired, as she started upstairs.

"Oh, sure," she replied encouragingly.

"Then maybe you'll see me before the 25th."

"I'd be most pleased," she called back demurely. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight," he answered, leaning forward over the railing the better to see her. "And say—"

"What?" came floating down to him.

"Any time you want to use the 'phone, don't hesitate, remember, come right down."

As Miss Browne let herself in, she again caught the sound of the revellers across the court.

"Oh, I don't know," she murmured, tossing her head at the window opposite. "I guess there are others. And say," she giggled, doubling up in a chair for very merriment, "ain't it good I got through with the telephone stunt all right! It was a close shave seeing Mame ain't got one!"

# The Last Cartridge

BY WILLIAM GILMORE BEYMER

*Out of the West, the old West, of cow-towns without women, comes this gripping tragedy of impetuous youth and lonely old age. It is a world-old clash; this time with civilization's frontier as a dramatic setting.*

THE first man who built a shack beside the Santa Fé siding at that spot of desert where the sun's rays seemed to focus, and which was later to become the cow-town of Coro, found, after two weeks' residence, that his claim could never be that of oldest inhabitant. In an idle moment of curiosity he rode up a faintly marked trail, which wandered aimlessly along the side of a small canyon into the low foothills three or four miles from his shack, and there he received the surprise of his life. Rounding a sudden turn, he rode at one step out of the sterility of the sage and sand and blistering rock, into a basin-shaped valley not a stone's throw in diameter. A very old, weather-beaten corral and a shack, white-washed and,—wonder of wonders, —covered by morning-glory vines; a bubbling spring, fringed by lush grass and carefully girdled by a barbed-wire fence, against which leaned a tall, slender, brown-haired girl who stared at him in silence—all these he saw at one sweeping, comprehensive glance. The door of the shack opened and a shaggy old man stepped, blinking, into the glare of sunlight. He carried a Winchester over his arm. The girl, without speaking, crossed lithely the intervening space and stood beside him. There was such an air of hostility about the two that the nearly oldest inhabitant was rendered speechless.

"Well!" rumbled the old man.

"Afternoon, neighbor," pacifically said the man from the siding. There was a pause. "I got a shanty, yonder, by the sidin',—I jes' rode over,—I didn't know anyone was livin' here," the man from the siding made an uncomfortable job explaining. The girl said never a word.

"Ef y've got a shack by the sidin' I reckon y' caint be in need o' nothin'," the old man spoke slowly. "Mebbe y'd better get offen my land and ride back where y' come from."

Had he been less taken aback, the man who had "jes' rode over" would have resented the other's attitude but, in a daze, he put on his sombrero, turned his horse, and loped down the trail—and out of this story.

The town of Coro sprang up as cow-towns will. When five shacks faced the siding, a saloon came, and there followed all the adjuncts and appurtenances of a haphazardously built cattle-depot. Men there were who lived in the shacks, caroused in the saloon, and fought in the gambling hell; but no women; hence the burning interest for the "gal up the canyon." Twice a month Ol' Connaugh rode into town for supplies and, as morosely, rode out again. New arrivals set 'em up to the house, that the lady's health might be drunk, and their early meeting,—which they never had. When two men had been shot at and narrowly missed it was not considered healthy to "snoop around the morning-glories."

A notable exception to the toast-drinking boasters was young Billy Deane, but lately from the Brazos. He said little, but listened; and after the manner of

silent men it was his to win. As to the incident of their meeting and the ripening of the acquaintance into love, no one ever knew. A Circle-O man had come unexpectedly upon the two, riding blithely along in the early twilight and, unseen himself, had slipped away. His news spread like wild-fire. When the unsuspecting lover stepped up to the bar an hour later he was greeted by a sudden roar of congratulations and queries. For a second he stood aghast, then deftly whipped out a long-barreled Colt, and, resting his elbows on the bar and lolling back, drawled: "Ef any gent wants to discuss my pus'nal business—"

There was an instant's silence. Smith, the bar-keep, saved the situation. He made a broad, inclusive gesture and the roomful, as one man, stepped to the bar. When the glasses were all filled and the heads bared, each man raised his glass high, bowed solemnly to the flushed youngster at the bar, then turning, faced the foothills and silently emptied his glass. So delicate a compliment could not be resented by the most fastidious.

The progress of the courtship could only be speculated upon, until one Sunday, about a month later. The afternoon was stifling, oppressive; the dozen men who hunched in the chairs tilted against the wall, were listless and inert. Outside, there was not a breath of air, but in the south gray, wind-ribboned clouds stole up over the horizon and seemed linked to earth by a pallid haze which grew in height as it drew swiftly nearer.

Deane entered and noiselessly crossed the room. When he reached the bar he turned and faced the row against the wall.

"There's a preacher-chap in from the Fort," he said. Then all in one breath, "he's goin' to hold a meeting in Carley's faro joint an' after the meetin' I'm goin' to be married. She's read about these here big church weddin's an' she says she alllus wanted one o' them kind, and this is 's near 's we kin come to it. You boys is invited."

Then, as his words were slowly comprehended, the row of tilted chairs came down with a crash and there was a joyous scramble to reach him. Outside, the sand-storm had come, and it beat against the window-panes, but no one in the saloon noticed it. No one noticed the puff of dust that swirled in as the door opened. No one noticed the old man, spectre-like in his leprous-white powdering of alkali. Young Deane, above the hubbub, was unnecessarily explaining: "I'm goin' to marry the girl up the canyon,—Miss Corinne Connaugh."

"Say that again, young feller!"

In the hush the answer jerked out: "I'm—goin'—to—marry your daughter." A shot finished the sentence.

A moment after, it would have seemed that what had happened could never have occurred were it not for the huddled figure on the floor and the open door through which came clouds of dust.

Out in the enveloping, obliterating storm, his bridle flying, his arms vainly shielding his low-bent face, rode an old man, shouting at the stinging sand: "She's all I have—all—all I have." The hoarse voice scarcely rose above a whisper in the gray night of flying sand, but he still cried his justification: "All—all I have!"—again and again till the blinded pony staggered into the sheltering hills.

The cabin, as he entered, struck an unfamiliar note of emptiness.

"Corinne!" he called fearfully. After the unavailing search he stood still in the center of the room, staring dumbly before him. She would come back to her old dad, surely, yes, surely. Wasn't *he* all she had—now? His eyes gleamed malignantly. She would come! If not? Then he would go back to town; but he must wait until dark, to go now meant

death. Another thought struck him, and he snapped open the breach of his revolver, drew out four discharged shells and tossed them away; then he felt in the pocket of his coat first on one side then on the other. His bewildered expression gave place to a look of abject terror. "I went to town fer ca'tridges an' I didn't git 'em. Now I got only two. Two!" he groaned. "If they should come before dark? But they won't come, damn 'em, they *won't* come!" he reiterated over and over again.

The only window of the room was heavily shuttered. He dragged the table over against the door, then flung himself down in the corner in the gloom, and waited—waited. The hot afternoon ground itself away with pitiless emphasis of time. A knot-hole , low on the western wall, let a bar of sunlight into the murky room and it fell in a brilliant splotch of gold on the grimy floor. The old man eyed it morosely until he noticed that it moved. After that he watched it eagerly, gloatingly, as the bar lengthened inch by inch and the fleck of gold slowly crossed the floor. He crawled about until he found two of the empty shells that he had tossed away; then he put one of them squarely in the center of the circle of light, the other a few inches in advance. Gradually the light left the one shell in shadow, crept the distance between, and as it glittered on the brass of the other, the old man grinned. Then he moved the rear shell ahead. So the day waned.

The circle of light had crossed the floor and was traveling up the eastern wall. The man watched it exultingly.

"An hour more! Only an hour!" he whispered. The bar was now horizontal, six inches above the floor; then it paled, flickered, and went out. He gave a gasp of relief. Outside, the sun was dipping below the horizon. The dusk deepened swiftly. He crossed the room and began to drag the table from the door. Suddenly he paused and listened intently. Then a look of utter hopelessness came into the haggard face. "Oh, God, y' might ha' given me ten little minutes more!" he whined. Nearer, nearer came the galloping hoofs, and a score of riders swept up.

"All right, Connaugh!" a dozen voices called. "It's all right!"

A gleam of wolfish cunning crossed the old man's face. "They don't fool *me,*" he sneered, and as a hand fumbled with the latch, he fired through the door, breast high.

"Oh, Dad!"

He tore away the table and flung open the door. At his feet knelt Deane with the girl's body in his arms.

"She is dead," he said.

Behind him stood the semi-circle of men, for once too horrified to act.

Deane stood up. "My wife goes home to my cabin. Help me, boys. *Him?*"—in answer to the rising mutterings—"We leave him to his thoughts!"

High in the hills above the silent, lonely valley a wolf howled in the dark. From the black open doorway of the cabin came a soft scuffling sound as of some one on hands and knees groping upon the floor. Then the voice of an old, old, man:

"One ca'tridge is all I have left—just all!"

# The Pirate's Holiday

BY LEO CRANE

*Did you ever feel you would like to kick the traces, forget your own little world, your own little circle of friends and acquaintances and go somewheres—that somewheres being a few thousand miles from your present location? Shake hands with Mr. Augustus Titwillow. He felt just that way and he "kicked." What happened after is this story.*

R. Augustus Titwillow added a column the thirteenth time. He frowned, sighed, and tapped his irregular teeth with the gritty point of his bookkeeper's pencil. For the thirteenth time he was nonplussed.

It was nearing noon of a Saturday. A whistle blew, and the firm slipped into his street coat. When the office door slammed behind the old gentleman, Mr. Augustus Titwillow did not raise his head from his task. He did look up, however, when the door opened to readmit the boss, and judging from his bewildered expression, Mr. Titwillow must have fancied he had worked through afternoon and night and that this was morning again.

"I forgot to say, August," said the firm, "that I intend to go into the country this afternoon. You may conduct things as usual, and—and close for the half-holiday—that is, if you see fit."

His tone implied a confidence that August would not see fit, or should not take such a liberty even if he did. The door closed a second time, and once again Mr. Augustus Titwillow regarded the memorandum of figures before him. The intensity of his gaze was pathetic. His brows knit nervously, his thin lip dropped in an expression of sheer helplessness, of badgered defeat, and his watery eyes wandered up and down the column as if seeking for an injury.

He was looking for a stray cent. He had been searching assiduously for that miserable copeck during two whole days, and it had eluded him. He would willingly have paid the cent, and ninety-nine more, from his pocket, only such is not the way of bookkeepers, nor does the action coincide with the pure ethics of the trial balance.

Mr. Augustus Titwillow was a thin individual, not tall, with sandy hair that refused submission to either comb or brush, a perky stubble of mustache, and an equally perky nose, half way down which was superimposed a jaunty red pimple. He was perched on a high stool before a breast-high desk, and he maintained his position by that singular grapevine twist of his legs, that faculty of contortion peculiar to bookkeepers who use high stools, and which is so often fatal to their otherwise faultless symmetry.

Mr. Titwillow did not leave the office for a lunch. One o'clock found him still pursuing the cent, and two o'clock also. At two-fifteen he sighed, shoved the ledger aside, and reached for perhaps his only dissipation—a yellow-covered magazine. He began to read without having made any attempt to untwine himself. At two-fifty he grumbled audibly and for the first time yawned, having arrived where the narrative stopped for that month.

Mr. Titwillow had not the vaguest intention of applying the Saturday half-holiday to himself. But he wasted a few minutes in reflection. In fact, he often

sat thus, when not hunting stray cents, or figuring the cost of canned second-grade tomatoes, or averaging the number of copper checks paid to the laborers in the packing-house below. In these moments of idleness, his thoughts were not the most pleasant. He believed his life to have been wasted—at least thirty-seven years of it. His romantic spirit had been canned, so to speak. He could find comfort only in the pages of magazines, and even these were not always quieting for it seemed to him that the heroes of the stories pointed their critical and scornful fingers at him, saying: "Augustus Titwillow! What are you, pray? You are nothing but a quill-driving slave, perched like a parrot, wearing out your good red blood and youth over the ledgers of a miserly fruit packer. You are the general factotum of a smelly packing-shed, set between a dock and a sewer, and you wouldn't rise to an adventure if you stumbled across one and it broke your shins. Bah! Titwillow! You are disgustingly commonplace."

He knew it. They were right. Consider the life of which he had just been reading—devoted to typhoons and mutinies and the ruling of savage isles. Then consider the bald life of Augustus Titwillow, who ruled nothing but the ledger, and who cringed every time the boss spoke.

"Bah!" said Mr. Augustus Titwillow, disgusted with himself.

Then he looked across the office, through a begrimed window-pane, and out over a weather-beaten shed, to see, apparently, the masts of a schooner edging along the ridge-pole. He was not astounded, although an exclamation of surprise came from his lips. He knew instinctively that a schooner's hull was below the masts, and that it was propelled probably by a tug-boat up the dock.

A schooner! A schooner docking after a voyage in the tropics, perhaps. He thought of the calm sweet nights under the glowing stars. A schooner with the smell of the West Indies clinging to her, and the tan of that hot West Indian sun upon her crew. A schooner from the Spanish Main! These thoughts led a hundred visions in their train—of rough seas, uncharted wastes, mutinies, piracy, marooning, plots, shipwrecks, ragged maps and treasure islands. He ran to the window, the spirit of adventure lifting his thirty-seven years aside for the moment. Romance flitted through his mind, such a vivid gleam as Joseph Conrad had given him. In that one moment he pictured mentally Robinson Crusoe and John Silver, the Mysterious Island, Two Years Before the Mast, and Botany Bay.

But Mr. Augustus Titwillow suddenly remembered that stray cent, and went slowly back to the trial balance. No sooner did he view the serried ranks of twos and threes and sevens and nines, than a horde of characters from romantic scenes burst upon him with renewed vigor, a perfect swarm of them. He slammed the ledger shut.

"What do I get for this—this slavery!" he exclaimed aloud, glancing toward the door. "Twenty dollars a week!" he declaimed louder, noting that the door was fairly closed and that no astonished visage peered through its glass. "Twenty paltry dollars a week!" he shrieked out in half a frenzy. "And I have saved nothing! Who could? Twenty dollars! Thirteen years of it! No chance for anything, and my lungs all squeezed up hunting cents. Hunting *cents!* Think of it! Not doubloons or louis d'or—but *cents*— and those cents not my own. It is an outrage, and I'll have no more of it. I say, *I'll have no more of it!*"

He flung the ledger across the office, and its aged sheepskin binding ripped like an old glove. He snarled above it and ground it with his heel.

And in that moment of splendid outburst, Mr. Augustus Titwillow had made up his mind. He would run away, egad! And find adventures worthy of himself! He would throttle monotony. He would be a man.

Hastily he dashed off a note, notifying the firm of his resignation, stating that the books were at the service of someone else—the devil, if they saw fit. He heaved a tremendous sigh of relief, a breath of freedom, once this was finished and sealed. He had quit. Paying himself off from the cash drawer, he drew on his coat and darted down the stairs.

On reaching the street, his first thought was to go to his lodgings, pack his clothes and to draw from bank the fifty-two dollars he had saved against the winter. But it was Saturday afternoon, and the banks had closed at twelve.

"Bah!" he snorted, with a magnificent disdain. "Whoever heard of a true adventurer packing his clothes. Did any of them have clothes to pack. And real adventures grow from a penniless condition."

So he started for the docks, quite empty-handed, but resolute.

On the way he thought of the great black steamers, carrying coal and iron ore and bales of freight, and salt and sulphur, and timid congregations of men and women. Little of romance in them. In spite of size, they represented the commonplace drudgery of old ocean, monster hulks backed by monster fortunes, their voyages shackled by charts and orders and insurance. He had had enough of that. No—he would seek the little boats, because being small, they have a chance to wander and to be forgotten. Then he remembered the two masts he had seen gliding so mysteriously up the adjacent dock, and he stole about through a lumber yard to investigate. As he had suspected, it proved a schooner chartered for a trip to the Bahamas, for pineapples, and the last of her stores were being hurried on board from Hoskins ship-chandlery shop on the wharf.

"Hello!" he called to the man on the deck, "what are you doing there? I thought you ran the *Don Carlos*."

"So I did, once, Mr. Titwillow," replied the other respectfully. "But the old *Don* has been sold, and I am now master of this craft. A tidy boat, eh? We go out for pines, tonight."

"Tonight?"

"Yes. There's a tug comin' up about seven. How's the boss?"

Mr. Augustus Titwillow shuddered at this query, for once having embarked on a life of adventure, he had for the moment forgotten the firm and the dusty office and all his miserable past. He wondered if this schooner captain, a man well known to him and all the water-front, would seriously consider taking him for a voyage of adventure. He responded that the boss was all right, and decided that the man would likely laugh at his proposal. But he kept in mind that the schooner would be towed out at seven o'clock. And he determined that sometime before seven, had he the slightest chance, he would stow away. And this is exactly what he did.

Just before the tug arrived, when everyone was occupied, he slipped below. Ignorance led him to stow in the cabin, and a noise on the ladder a moment later caused him to swiftly duck into the captain's state-room, a cubby-hole off the main cabin, large enough for a berth and a clothes-nail or two, and a locker. Once there, he realized his mistake and the possibility of immediate discovery; but he determined to do all he could to avoid this, and huddled himself in the captain's meager wardrobe.

Then he heard hoarse shoutings and the thumps of fenders against the side and the snorting and whistling of the tug. Finally, he felt that they were mov-

ing down the dock toward the narrow neck of the busy harbor, and knew that an hour would see them fairly along the river and nearing the bay. His heart gave a great leap of exultation. He had cut loose at last.

For a long time Mr. Augustus Titwillow stood in his narrow hiding-place, cuddling himself delightedly. He was fairly embarked on as desperate a cruise as he had ever read of, and the end no man could foretell. Perhaps piracy loomed in the offing, as yet concealed by the fog of chance. He had always leaned toward refined piracy, and believed it was in him to refurbish the old trade with a cunning hand.

The noises that sounded from the deck were of the sort to stimulate these dreams. He could hear the creaking of ropes through blocks and the groaning of a boom at intervals. The slushy sucking of the water boiling past the hull, and the hoarse voice of someone giving orders, told him that the tug had cast them off. Now the schooner began to heel more than a trifle, and Mr. Augustus Titwillow was rocked to and fro with the lurch of it. It was stuffy in the little cabin, and he thought, of a sudden, that he would be better if he were on deck in the fresh open air. It was very stuffy, extremely close, in the little pocket of a place. The sweat began to pour from his forehead and down his face, and the more he wiped off, the more seemed to be there. His palms were dripping. This would never do. His knees became wobbly. Was he—heavens! Was he getting seasick? No, no,—he managed to stifle a groan,—it would never do. But he did feel squeamish. He fancied that the schooner was out of the river now—that choppy motion must mean the short cross waves of the bay—and he believed that he could safely come forth from the wardrobe. He decided he would do even better, and that, feeling as he did, he would stretch out a bit in the captain's bunk. Did he not know Jones, the master, and in a business way had he not patronized him? Jones would not mind. So Mr. Augustus Titwillow broke the first canon of the sea, knowingly. Romance, written by many experienced hands, had long ago told him that for a stowaway to occupy the captain's bunk was a heinous crime; but he knew Jones, and he did feel wobbly, and besides, as his future career was to be of a desperate hue, he would not hesitate to begin at once. He did not care a fig for Jones. A man who feels perfectly lawless has nothing to fear. So he stretched out.

Twenty minutes later the door opened softly, and a bulky form filled the space of it. The little light that streamed in from the main cabin showed Mr. Augustus Titwillow that—heavens! This was not Jones. Had he stowed himself on board the wrong vessel? As he cowered back in his tiny berth the big man came softly forward and felt upon the locker's shelf. He sought a bottle, found it, and took a hasty swig, which was followed by a thick gasp of satisfaction. Mr. Titwillow smelled raw liquor, and at this very moment was taken with an irresistible desire to sneeze. It overpowered him. He did sneeze—a very violent effort, too—all the more violent because he had sought to suppress it.

He expected to be instantly caught by the neck and haled forth; but the other man yelped like a scared dog, dropped the bottle, and plunged outside, slamming shut the door behind him. Mr. Titwillow heard him crash through the outer cabin, and the noise of his hurried scrambling up the ladder to the deck.

Some minutes passed without event. Then Mr. Titwillow heard the cautious, almost stealthy approach of feet. He thought he could distinguish more than one pair, and wondered if he should

fight or parley. They might be too many for him, he pondered. Then a lantern appeared in the doorway, and from the blackness beyond it came the burly man's doubtful voice:

"I beg pardon, Sir, but I thought you were—"

Mr. Titwillow seized this opening cue.

"You do right well to beg my pardon, you lubber," he said pompously. "I have half a mind to have you triced up."

There sounded a choking gasp.

"Stand by, men," said the thick voice, tremulous with excitement, "I don't fancy this. It's a mystery—may be murder."

Mr. Titwillow realized that the big man had brought help. He saw several coarse faces peering over the other's shoulders.

Then the lantern came closer, advancing by inches.

"Don't yeh dare shoot," cautioned the voice, " 'cause I'll—"

Then the yellow light fell on Mr. Titwillow ensconced in the bunk, and the burly man saw the rumpled sandy hair, the perky mustache, the blinking watery blue eyes, and the red wart superimposed jauntily on Mr. Augustus Titwillow's defiant, if not insolent, nose. He staggered back in surprise.

"Well, the idea!" he exclaimed. And then Mr. Titwillow felt a horny hand inserted between his neck and his collar; and fighting like a game herring, he was dragged forcibly out into the cabin.

"Give me room, men," ordered the big man.

They allowed him enough room in which to slam Mr. Augustus Titwillow several times against the cabin table and the bulkhead, before they closed in with the light. The lantern was placed on the table, and with the curiosity of so many children they clustered around to examine him. He was a find. The big man dropped into a chair, thrust himself back and stared. Several times he attempted to speak, but no words came. He seemed paralyzed with interest and amazement.

"Don't be afraid," choked Mr. Titwillow, glaring at them fiercely. "I can't eat you all,—but give me a chance and I'll toss that big swab over the side."

The burly man emitted a guffaw that sounded like an explosion. The exertion restored his speech.

"On deck, you men," he said, grimly, "I'll attend to this shrimp."

"Shrimp!" cried Mr. Titwillow. "Where is your captain?"

"Ah! Where is he?" exclaimed the other, grinning benevolently. "Since you seem anxious to know, I'll tell yeh. He's gone by steamer to Soloman's Island, where I'll stand in an' pick him up after he's seen his missus. I'm the captain here, my fine feller. Now you explain to me what's your game. What are yeh doin' here, amongst we honest fellers, hidin' and sneezin' like that?"

"I demand to see Captain Jones," insisted Mr. Titwillow anxiously. "I'll explain to him."

The mate raised his fist, a ponderous lump of meat and bones covered with brown skin, freckles, and hair, and brought it down on the cabin table with a bang that raised the lantern clear of the board.

"You'll explain to me, you warty-nosed, taffy-haired pick-pocket. An' git busy with it, too, else I'll be tempted to take a rope's end to yer. What were yeh doin' in the cap'ten's bunk?"

"Mr. Augustus Titwillow began to consider, but the mate broke in:

"I know yeh for what you are," he said suspiciously. "You wanted to stowaway an' git a free v'yage to the Bahamas, fer your health, mebbe, 'cause you look sickly. But it don't go, my man. We can't run a hospital ship. I'm sorry for yeh, but the cap'ten is particular."

"Well," half queried Mr. Titwillow; as much as to say, "What are you going to do about it?"

The mate looked him over, as if he would like to treat him benevolently, if it were not for circumstances. Then he leaned back in his chair, and, apparently forgetting the presence of Mr. Titwillow, reviewed the strange situation aloud.

"The first stowaway I've ever seed," he said, and Mr. Titwillow squirmed, for he did not like the idea of being a curiosity. "Sailin', man and boy, these thirty years, an' never seed a stowaway before.

"It's remarkable,—that's what it is, remarkable. I thought at first it was a murder, or a ghost. But it is remarkable. Now I've often wanted to see somethin' that them book-writers tell about, a' now I've seen it. Pirates is gone an' the first scuffle of a mutiny I can clear with a club, but here is a real stowaway. That's a fact. I can see him plain. He oughter be in a mooseum. Well,—what's to be done? If I let him stay, he'll tell the cap'ten that I was—that I made a mistake in the bottle, an' then, mebbe, the cap'ten'll do somethin' handsome by him, 'cause the old man is fair cranky. By jinks! I'll manage somethin' else that I've always thought was writ down from imagination. Somethin' I've always wanted to have a hand in, too."

He leaned forward toward Mr. Titwillow, as if to become confidential, and asked solemnly:

"Was you ever marooned?"

"No," came the reply. "But—"

"Neither was I. An' worse luck, I never see a man marooned, either. The sea ain't what it's cracked up to be, these days. Pirates is gone, an' mutinies, but I've always hoped to live to see a maroonin', and it's come true. Thirty year I've been sailin' these schooners, cargo-stowin' an' sail-haulin' an' keeping a course within the buoys. All work, no play or bedevilment; and I've never had a chance to see anythin' like music until now."

Mr. Augustus Titwillow swallowed hard and interposed:

"That's the very reason why I came away, Mr.—Mr. Mate. I wanted to see something of real life, something different, and—"

"By heavens! You're agoin' to," said the mate, heartily. "You—" and he leveled a thick finger that reminded Mr. Titwillow of a gun—"you're goin' to be marooned. On deck there, Smith. Get ready to lower a boat."

"Aye, Sir."

Mr. Titwillow had not bargained for this. He arose and protested. He demanded that this inhuman thing be not done. He said he would fight first.

"All right matey," agreed the other, with a sincere willingness. "Perhaps we'll have to tie yer, to keep from breakin' things; but marooned you'll be, all the samey."

"There's no island in this bay," claimed Mr. Titwillow.

"Then I'll get yeh ashore, somewheres, an' you can walk back home. I'm not goin' to risk my job as mate for the likes of you, anyway. All ready with that boat?"

"Aye, Sir."

"Up you go," declared the mate, rising to his full height and breadth. The thoughts Mr. Titwillow had momentarily cherished concerning a display of fisticuffs, now vanished, and he hastily scrambled up the ladder to avoid being hoisted by the mate's huge foot.

A cool wind, the night-wind, struck him when he bounced on deck. The schooner was heeling a trifle, and the water splashed white over her rail and to Mr. Titwillow looked very savage. The canvas surged and sang its taut note. There was the odor of the life about

him, the pitch from the seams and the dank moisture of the waves. It was a very cosy little craft and one that promised much adventure, if he could only cling to her. He thought of her a week hence, after lifting the palm-set islands, and of the calm nights on an ocean lighted by the golden tropic moon. All these things flashed upon him as he heard the mate's feet upon the ladder. He drew back to meet him and said hurriedly:

"Don't do it, friend. Let me make the voyage and I'll pay you handsome, I will,—take my word for it. I'll say nothing about the bottle—"

"Man! You're ungrateful," accused the mate, grimly, "Here I've been sailin' schooners nigh onto thirty year, with never a chance of bein' marooned, or seein' one. You don't know what you're goin' to enjoy. All ready there? Hawkins, throw in some bread an' meat for this chap, an' you, Brown and Smith, set him ashore. That light off there is one of them excursion places. That'll do. He can amoose himself on the merry-go-round."

"All right, Sir," came the voices, and the men dropped into what seemed, to Mr. Titwillow, a very tiny boat. The black waves were lifting greedily, and the boat tossed up and down, as a whimsical and fragile thing. He looked off into the darkness. There was no sign of shore; just a thick curtain of sombrous black hung down all around the schooner. There were no stars. He thought of those sections of bay shore he had seen by daylight, and their sterile loneliness. What would happen to him?

"Steamer on the port bow, Sir!" called a man forward.

Mr. Titwillow saw the ranks of lights gliding toward them.

As the big craft drew nearer, he could hear the smash of her paddles and the churning of the water. A pleasure boat, brilliantly lighted, burst out of the dark. Swiftly she plunged by, and greeting cries came across to them from the freight of tired merrymakers. Mr Titwillow remembered how often he had leaned from the rail of such a vessel to scrutinize some sleepy little schooner drifting through the night, to wonder where she was bound and what would become of her. This was his opportunity to learn the answer; but with the passing of the steamer, the schooner rolled, and the men fended off the dancing little boat. Mr. Titwillow hesitated at the command: "Over with yeh!"

Then he felt the mate's hands grasp his collar and trouser-seat, and he was dropped down, into the sea he thought, but in reality to bang his head against a thwart. He heard a call:

"You'll find the pier right abeam."

Looking around, he found that the schooner had disappeared. He clutched desperately the side of the boat.

Now they made out the dark line of the pier, like some forlorn wreck. Close to it the men ran the boat up, until its keel grated.

"Over with yeh!" they commanded, and Mr. Augustus Titwillow, thoroughly subdued by the loneliness and the mystery of the dark, hopped out into the water. He caught the package of food tossed him and without a word of parting, scuttled up onto dry land. He heard the men laughing as they pulled away.

Mr. Augustus Titwillow reached the beach in a forlorn condition. His feet and legs were sopping, and his courage was at a low ebb. This chilling and unlooked for end to his dreams put a dampener over him. He was no longer bold. When he looked at the overhanging bluffs, which seemed ready to pounce upon him, and at the dismal stretches of sand,—the whole scene made extremely mournful by the melancholy washing in of the waves,—he became timid and fully

aware of his insignificance. The fear of being absolutely forsaken crept into his once dauntless heart. He shuddered, and tried to wring the water from his trousers.

He had been to this place once before, but never imagined its utter desolation. Certainly no more distressing scene can be conjured up than a pleasure ground bereft of pleasure; dark, silent, strewn with the empty lunch boxes and papers of a departed multitude. Save the one flickering lamp on the pier, there were no lights. The sun and laughter of the several hours before had vanished in a murk that brought to mind only harrowing possibilities.

Remembering that the pier end was covered, he determined to seek rest there until the morning boat came in. He hurried over the sand, fearful that some ominous beach comber would discover him and question his reason for being.

Once the hard pier planks were under foot, he felt surer of himself, and hurried out toward the shed where gleamed fitfully the solitary lamp. When he had almost arrived at the end, he paused irresolutely, hearing a curious noise. His heart went pit-a-pat.

"By George!" he muttered. "Some one is crying. I wonder—"

Something within him impelled a move forward to ascertain the cause of misery, and something equally urgent advised him in no uncertain language to mind his own business. But came the damning knowledge that an adventurer, however sopping and distressed, ought not to be frightened by tears, and he went on. He saw a white spot in the gloom of the shed, and called out:

"What's the matter? Don't be afraid!"

"Oh!—Oh!—"

"A child," said Mr. Titwillow courageously. "Now, now—What has happened to the little girl? Where is your home—up over the bluff?"

It flashed on him that he might secure a night's lodging.

She stifled her sobs somewhat, and tried to answer him:

"I—I went in the woods,—and—I—and I got lost—and when the whistle blew, I ran, and fell down, and hurt my knee." Then came more sobs and sniffs, a score of them.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Titwillow, "But—"

She broke out with one horrified sentence:

"There won't be any more boats tonight."

"But where is your momma?" he asked gently.

"She—she went on the boat, and left me. She thinks I'm gone and drowned."

This was discouraging.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Titwillow, wondering what could be done. "Now—now don't cry so, little girl. It will be all right, and your momma won't worry, because she knows that I am here and that I will take care of you." He drew the flaxen head close to him and tried to comfort her. She was a slight little thing, perhaps thirteen, and the responsibility of a mere child, when he had just finished whimpering for himself, was bewildering.

It was just possible, he thought, that one of the cottages beyond the bluff might have occupants, even so early in the season, and that he could knock somebody awake to harbor them until morning. He had about nerved himself to penetrate the gloom above the beach, when he caught a glimmer of light, far out on the water. He watched it for a minute.

"A river steamer," he said to himself. "Now if I could take a boat and—" A number of small boats were padlocked to the pier's rail. It was worth trying. He had pulled a small boat often, but he shuddered at the dangers lurking in

the vast blackness beyond, between the pier's solidity and his possible haven.

However, he meant to do his best, and was tugging manfully at the chain, when came the realization that he had no oars. There were none in the boat. A man cannot be a hero without oars. He cursed the careful soul who had so diligently provided for the security of his boat, and registered a fervent hope that it would drown him yet. Then a second look toward the steamer showed that she was drawing in. The few lights, a half dozen yellow glims and one single glowing red eye, that seemed to be searching him out, were increasing in size, growing larger. Now he could hear the thresh of the paddles.

"She has some freight, I'll bet,—she's going to make this landing."

He began to laugh nervously. He caught the child's hand, saying:

"There's a big boat coming. Now we'll go back home to momma."

And that very commonplace thing they did. The child had grown tired, and soon fell asleep in the peaceful crook of Mr. Augustus Titwillow's arm. Occasionally, forgetting his sterner plans,he would look down at the tear-stained face, and smile. The river freighter ploughed slowly up the bay to the harbor and a wharf that usually was as silent as the grave at this hour. But on the dock stood an anxious group of people, ready with eager inquiries.

"Did you put in for anything at the Tolchester pier? Did you see—"

"Yes, Ma'm," said the captain, "Here she is. This gentleman—"

He looked around, but Mr. Augustus Titwillow had forfeited his chance to be a hero. He had suddenly remembered that flamboyant letter of resignation. Not until he reached the silent office and clutched the document of his short emancipation, did he breathe freely. The pirate's holiday was at an end. But when he thought of that stray cent in the trial balance he groaned aloud.

# The Palette of God

BY EDWIN BLISS

*Before you turn a page of this story you will be deep in brilliant Red Mesa, the land of "ledges, canyons, mountains and rough valleys, chucked out of heaven because it hurt the angels' eyes," and before you finish the yarn you will love "Podner," tender as a woman. It's a story of two miners, a fortune, and a dreamer.*

saw him first,—the poet man. He wasn't much to look at, just a messy, long-haired little fellow who got took quick in the wind and with eyes that hated anybody who felt sorry for him. Funny I noticed him at all. We see them every day out here, dragging themselves off the cars and hiking for the mountains. Almost every day, long pine boxes are shoved in the baggage car billing them back home. They come and go. Just lungers—that's all.

Guess his nerve was what stopped my pay car. He walked down the platform, straight and stiff till the cough hit him, racking his body terrible, but his eyes blazing warning at me not to notice it.

"Mountain air kind of bite your gizzard?" I asks careless like.

He whirled on me, mouth and eyes trying to cuss me, then keeled over in my arms, dead weight. Two days he fussed around the borders and barrancas of the Black Country before he comes to himself in my shack, his big eyes soft and shiny and wondering at the things he'd just seen. I bent over him and he recognized me immediate, fighting for his breath.

"'Tain't my gizzard," he gasps; "it's my lung, you idiot, and what the hell business is it of yours?"

And that's how I met up with Podner, P-a-r-d-n-e-r, Podner. He was my podner and Podner I called him always, it fitting better to my tongue than his fancy handle. Game as a pebble, Podner was. Never complained, but bunked in my shack like it was comfortable as home back East and I was refined and educaed. It takes some nerve to do that in a strange country when you haven't a nickel, haven't anything but a hole in your lung.

He would sit for hours before the door, writing kit handy, his eyes fastened on the timber line of St. Peter's Dome, where the creek twists round on itself and dances down the canyon just as though it hadn't ever figured on reaching the top. Days I'd leave him sitting there, the sad look on his face; nights I'd come back to find him still there, hungering for something he couldn't seem to quite locate. And the moon, white-washing the door, seemed to leave a lot of itself in Podner's eyes, tender, pleading, and easy to hurt. I'd never let on to notice, just get out the skillet and doctor up a mess of bacon and beans and then we'd eat, him silent and forgetful that I was there at all. I knew his mind was on that pad of paper; the pad that never showed a line of writing.

"The disease is mostly in his head," Doc used to say to me. "He is highly imaginative, Pete, all poet fellows are. Just distract his mind and you'll be astonished at the rapidity of his improvement."

But Podner was tender as a woman and I was just an old alkali and mountain man who knew nothing much that got

away from "color." I talked it over with Hell Diver heaps of times. Me and Hell Diver got that habit twenty years back when my wife—well, anyhow, burros have lots more sense than folks about such things, and finally I got an idea. I sprung it on him next time I heard him pacing up and down, down and up the floor, stopping at the window to stare out at the moon.

"Podner," says I, nervous for fear of getting him touchy, "I'm a tough old jasper without much feelings but I know one thing for certain sure, when a man spends his time looking at the moon, his ears is hankering for the rustle of one certain petticoat. I know, because I've stared myself. I married a dance-hall girl in Cripple's old days and gave her the Gophir Mine, after which she ups and runs off with Joe Ellwood. When Joe didn't come back I packed Hell Diver and started looking for him and another mine. Women is hard to get off the head, Podner, but a pipe and the sight of rich quartz will do it. In the morning, me and you start prospecting."

His eyes grew big with terror as he looked at me, then moved to the table, planting his hands on the writing pad and pencils lying there, protecting them as a jealous mother would her baby.

"My poetry, Pete!" he cried. "I'm too weak to do that and write. You don't, can't understand, Pete," he went on, softening his voice and resting his puny white hands on my shoulders in a way that always set me shivering inside. "I came out here to die, here in the mountains. I might just as well have died in New York if some big purpose hadn't been behind it all. I've felt the poem stirring within me in this big country, this country that frightens yet caresses me. I only want an hour Pete; my hour, when I can write all that I'm feeling. Only my hour Pete, and something tells me I'll get it."

I gentled him into seeing I'd never meant he should leave the poetry outfit behind, though I had meant just that; told him of real mountains beside which these were only foothills, mountains where a man could get a lungful of air without his chest hitting a crowd; got him excited and eager to be off, him being just a child in a strange country.

The stars were guttering out when we packed Hell Diver and started, the morning air searching out the marrow in our bones, and the sun painting the snow-filled canyons that top Cameron's Cone in a cross of blazing fire. Through the mountains which the miners had gophered out, down into valleys and up again, we travelled that day, with Podner chattering his delight and Hell Diver looking at him astonished, like an old-timer would, and me just happy.

The third day out he began to grow silent, and his imagination-drawn mines were turning out to be mica as his head sagged forward and his feet lagged and dragged. But I kept him walking, heading for Red Mesa, knowing it would astonish him plumb out of himself; besides, Red Mesa had never been half prospected.

We came on it the sixth day, just as me and Hell Diver had come on it a dozen times before, abruptly as you round the Devil's Slide. Podner was staggering, fighting for his feet, head leaning forward, and legs wobbly. He got one eyeful, then straightened, the breath coming through his teeth and into his lungs with a big, hissing sound. I knew his feelings, never having quite got over them myself when I stumble on Red Mesa.

A wilderness, a desert of rocks; a wilderness, a desert of mountains of rocks—that's Red Mesa. But it's not all red. There's no color or mix-up of colors that Red Mesa hasn't got. It's not made, Red Mesa ain't. It's just

tumbled together in ledges, canyons, mountains, rough valleys; chucked out of heaven because it hurt the angels' eyes. When the Lord painted this earth he must a worn Red Mesa for his clothes and, being so soiled when he finished, tossed them down here where only sun-squinted, old jaspers like me would tumble across 'em. Podner was whispering out loud, but whispering:

"It's the palette of God, Pete! The palette of God! I mustn't leave; mustn't go another step! I can write here, can see, and feel! And every color out there must be in my poem, every—"

He stopped, grabbing my arm till his weak fingers bit right to the bone. He wasn't whispering any more, the huskiness had disappeared from his voice, his eyes were clear but looking far away. He waved one hand toward Red Mesa while his voice rolled out like chiming gold.

"You see rocks out there, Pete; rocks and their colors. But I see more than rocks, more than colors—much more. I see my hour out there; the hour I've fought and prayed for. And, as I see my hour, just as plainly do I see all that mass of rock shape itself into buildings that pierce the sky, hiving with thousands and hundreds of thousands of human beings just like us. And the irregular rock canyons before me become streets, all crowded, Pete, with people. And there is one street where the hurrying crowd of human beings stop and stare into the great window of a great store—a book shop, Pete. They talk with one another although they are not acquainted, talk about the book, the volume staring out of that window at them. And there is a woman, Pete, who stops too. I do not know her, have never seen her, but some day I shall know her, shall see her. She does not talk. She looks at the book, Pete, and she has tear-mists in her eyes, and she does not know it nor would she care if she did, for she has read the book. It is the woman I have never seen save in the moon, Pete; and the book is the poem that shall be born of my hour, and it shall bring us together. That's what I see out there—New York, Pete. The city of power, they call it; the city of riches, they say it is. And as I look on the power of Red Mesa I feel I can put it in my poem, and it shall be so much more powerful than the man-made city; I see The Woman out there and the rich possession of her love will be so much richer than all the dross of the town. Oh, it's a wonderful country, Pete!"

"That's right," I agreed. "And it ain't been half mineralized."

He looked at me quick, as though hurt, then a curious, foxy expression crossed his face. That night he babbled like a trout stream, fancying mines so rich that old King Solomon must have tried to bust his grave to get out and see them; chattering of his useless existence and my splendid one; ripping Nature's innerds, her buried treasure from her rock ribbed heart—or something like that. And I just smoked my pipe, pretending I didn't know he was pleading with me to stay. Smart little fellow, Podner was.

Finally he rolled up in his blankets and kept still, staring at Red Mesa as the night got its sponge and wiped off all the colors there. The clouds were rocking the moon about and the stars burning big holes in the blanket thrown over them when Podner went to sleep, his breath slow and deep, with never a sign of a cough or hitch.

Funny how you get to know the stars. There's one big fellow that burns like a long-wicked candle and sometimes he stares at me till my pipe burns out and I can't see anything else but him. Old alkalis and mountain men get the habit of talking things over with the Lord when they're up pretty high, where he can hear 'em plain. Somehow, looking from Podner, sleeping with a look of

heaven on his woman's face, and at that unwinking star; listening to the tinkle of Hell Diver's bells as he roamed about with a bad dream, I got a hankering to talk things over.

"Lord," said I quiet, so as not to wake the little fellow, "me and you've made considerable medicine about Joe Ellwood—him as run away with my wife in Cripple Creek. I've sorta changed my mind about wanting you to send him in range. You've heard this podner of mine begging for his hour. I don't want to ask too much, but just hand him that hour, Lord, and I won't ask for nothing else and will take off my hat to you forevermore. Amen."

Maybe it was just because thinking of Joe Ellwood riled me, but I never before had slept good after talking with Him. That night I think I snoozed till morning. Even thinking about Podner made me peaceful and quiet. The little fellow was up ahead of me and when I looked around, after doctoring breakfast, there he was, sitting on a ledge, poetry outfit in his hands, staring out into Red Mesa, hungry like. He couldn't even eat for feasting his eyes on the rocks and their colors. And he wasn't coughing a mite, breathing as though the lung hole was plastered over. So I digs out my prospecting kit and hikes back in the hills looking for color, while Podner tries to catch 'em all at once.

Funny how Nature fools with an old jasper same as if he was a tenderfoot. I had been prospecting about six days, never thinking "color" was in the country, but just chuckling to see how fast Podner was getting cured while I made a bluff at working so as to humor him, when rich quartz, a big vein of it, just naturally crops up and hits me in the eye. Right on the surface it was, broad enough to make me think I had another Gophir. Just an accident, but that's always the way it runs. Jim Thatcher chucked away his pick, plumb disgusted, and it turned up the quartz that became Lost Mite Mine. Hell Diver stumbled and uncovered the vein that is the Gophir. It runs that way.

Six days we'd been there, and I'd worked three miles back from Red Mesa. Knowing how tickled Podner would be, him getting more cheerful as his lung healed, I ran that three miles in nothing flat. I found him sitting as I had left him, same position as he'd been in for six days, biting his pencil and staring at Red Mesa to catch it all at once. There was something pitiful about his hunched-over back, something that made me feel less happy about the quartz. I didn't tell him till we'd eaten and had a fire blazing to keep the night wind out of our bones; then I hauled out my specimens, careless like, and watched him as he picked them up. His long thin fingers just seemed to kiss the streaks of dirty gold in them, his eyes darkening.

"Gold, Pete?" he asked softly. "You have found it?"

"Gold, Podner," I answered knocking out my pipe on the heel of my boot, ashamed to meet his eyes for some reason. "Pretty surface cropping as ever I saw—it's another Gophir."

"And this," he whispered softly to himself, not knowing I could hear, "is gold—gold." He stroked the specimens lightly, that shiny glad look in his eyes as they met mine across the fire. He rose, came over and sat down beside me, leaning his bent elbow on my shoulder. "Pete," he began, "this morning you said the grub was low, that we would have to be on our way. How far is this gold from here—from Red Mesa?"

"A matter of three miles," I answered, uneasy for the curious expression on his face. "We'll make the trip to Ozone in no time—eight days at the most."

"Eight days," he murmured, still looking at me queer. "Pete, I've learned a

great deal of this country from listening to you talk. Eight days is a long time to leave a mine alone. Yesterday you said a day was a long time to keep the smell of gold from a prespector's nose. Claim jumpers could do many things in eight days."

I tried to laugh, but a man can't laugh much at what he's said for gospel and what he knows is gospel. Then I decided to keep quiet, taking it out on Hell Diver. For Podner had the idea that my mine would be in danger and, knowing his unselfish ways, I was nervous for what he'd decide to do. He woke me while the air was cold, the stars still blazing high. His eyes were big and tender as he looked at me and the circles beneath 'em showed he hadn't even turned in.

"I've found the way out, Pete," he said quietly; "sitting here, it came on me what should be done. You've been awfully good to me, humored me and cared for me like I was your son. I know now that the purpose of our meeting, my coming to this country, wasn't to give me my hour, my poem, but to help you to the riches you have earned. It's a far bigger purpose, Pete; and I am thankful, being so weak and you so big and strong, to be used for it. And now you are going to Ozone alone to get the things we need, and I will guard your mine while you are gone. That will be my hour, Pete; so much more worthy an hour than the one I thought had been laid out for me."

You can't argue with women or men like Podner. His imagination was hitched to the idea of guarding my location, and anything that appealed to his imagination plumb tickled him. I finally took him to the vein, gave him my old Colts .45 on a .38 carriage, and left him there —proudest little fighting cock that ever hit the mountains; feeling he was sacrificing himself and his poem to a generous idea. That was Podner all the time.

Foolish? Of course it was. But somehow, the memory of him standing guard for me, his soul crying out for the poem and his heart giving it up for me—well, it made my legs eat up the miles between me and Ozone, made Hell Diver sore as the itch. Just three days took me to town, got me outfitted, and ready for the return trip.

And all the way back I was chuckling for joy at thinking of Podner's sacrifice. Doc used to tell me he was a selfish little prig and I an old fool, and I was happy to think of what Doc would say when I told him of this. It was near the end of the sixth afternoon that I sighted landmarks and knew I was close. Thinks I to myself, maybe Podner will salt me with lead if I come on him unexpected. So I takes off Hell Diver's bells and tethers him while I slips up on my location, quiet and soft and easy. And, times, I'd have to stop and get my breath from laughing at the picture I could almost see, of Podner guarding the place with that businesslike Colts, fierce and savage as though he'd been paped on blood instead of milk.

Then a bullet whined over my head, singing a most uncomforting tune. I laughed still, as I rose, seeing the surprise on Podner's face, but the laugh wandered off somewhere else as I found my eyes staring into the black hole of a Winchester and, behind that hole, into the toughest, black bearded pirate's features I'd ever seen.

"You're wandering on my location, stranger," he growled. "Vamoose—molly pronto!"

"You're location like hell!" I came back quick, cussing myself as I recollected leaving my new gun back with Hell Diver, riled at knowing my own helplessness.

"Vamoose," he repeated, rocking the gun in my direction. "I've got this loc-

ation staked neat and businesslike. Just wander on till I see what your back looks like."

Little ants' nests of nerves began tickling the back of my neck while the icy fingers played along my spine, for a thought—a horrible thought—hit me between the eyes as I looked on his ugly face. What had this pirate done with Podner—the little fellow—Podner, whom I'd left in charge? For a second I was ready to spring at him, to choke the truth out of him, and the Winchester grew steady as a rock when he saw my thought.

"My podner," I asked, trying to keep my voice steady; "what did you do to my podner? I staked this location and you know it; I left my podner in charge. If you've hurt him I'll skin you alive. Jump my claim all you want but tell me about my podner. What have you done with him?"

"Nobody was here when I lit," he answered, his face showing me plain that he was telling the truth. "I ain't seen hide nor hair of a human in thirty miles." My heart sank low as I looked helplessly about; the great rough country around me menacing the little fellow. Then a light lit up the fellow's eyes. "Hold on," he called, as I started to walk off. "I did speak to a runty, long haired lunytic dancing like a tarantula, down to Red Mesa. I spoke to him but he didn't see me. Plumb loco, he was."

Like a flash I saw it all and, as I saw, everything got a hazy red, like seeing through a bloody veil. I didn't answer, just turned on my heel and headed toward Red Mesa. If I had asked Podner to guard the location; if I had wanted him to stay behind; if I had dreamed of hinting that he should neglect his poem, give me his hour—then I wouldn't have cared. But it had all been his own idea. And the idea had been such a comfort to me, had warmed my heart so, made me forget so many things I'd always felt hard about, forget the wife who ran away, forget Joe Ellwood whose blood I thirsted for, had put love in me where hate had bubbled before—that was the hurt of it. Podner who had healed all my bitterness, uncovered fresh springs of gall within me, made them run strong as they had in the beginning—springs that had been suffering droughts—Podner had done this to me—the little fellow whom I liked so much.

Liked so much, but hated now—hated with a black hate. My fingers itched to finish up what consumption had begun, itched to tear down what this country had almost healed. I hadn't asked him to stay, to give me anything. He had done it himself, all of it. He had made me happy, glad, only to turn my feelings round to this. I had figured on him because he had asked me to, had made me figure on him, and he had fooled me. And, with every thought, I walked the faster, hating—hating—

Sudden, as you round the Devil's Slide, I came upon him. He was sitting as I'd seen him sit so many days, sitting as I had left him mornings and as I would find him nights—facing Red Mesa. His back was hunched over till his face was buried on his arms, folded upon his knees. Beside him was the pad of paper, lying on the ground. I looked at him, wondering how I could ever have thought him pitiful. He was puny, miserable now—an ant that dared to look upon Red Mesa, which was only made for men, real men, to look upon.

Soft, I slipped up behind him, hating him for sleeping—sleeping while my location was being jumped; sleeping three miles away from my location which he'd volunteered to guard, against my return. Worthless, a loafer, an ant! Doc had told me, had seen his real nature. Doc had been right and I was an old fool. He knew, Doc did, why the paper pad was always empty. I

picked it up from the ground, sneering on the little fellow's back. But the pad wasn't white now, wasn't empty. It was covered with writing, writing which I started to read, sneering on the back of the man who slept three miles way from the location he allowed to be stolen. And then I sneered no more, nor I didn't hate no more, nor the springs of bitterness didn't gush so strong, for I was reading Podner's poem.

Everybody knows it now, everyone's read it; but they don't know it, never have read it as I did—Podner sleeping there, worn out and happy; Red Mesa blazing at my feet, and off a ways, the black shadows folding up the mountained wilderness of burning rocks and tucking them away for the night. And there was the poem in my hands that took it all—Red Mesa by day and by night and Red Mesa now, and chucked it all on a piece of paper not much bigger than a patch in my pants. All the colors of Red Mesa were on that piece of paper; every rock in Red Mesa was there; every ravine, canyon, hill, valley of Red Mesa was on it; the Lord, as he chucked Red Mesa out of heaven, was caught in the act. But that wasn't all. As I read it, I could hear the tinkle of a burro's bells, could see a burro's mallet head poking round the corner of a gorgeous ledge—and it wouldn't have been Red Mesa without a burro. And that ain't half. Though there wasn't a word about woman in the poem, there wasn't a word of it all that wasn't woman, didn't make me see woman. It was Podner's woman—the woman he'd seen in the moon, the woman he'd seen looking in the book store window, with tear-mists in her eyes which she didn't know nor care about. For she had read the poem which was in my hands, the woman he had seen in his mind and only there, the ideal woman he was calling to in the poem.

And because she was the woman he had never seen, the woman who was in his head, the woman he was calling, she was my woman too. She was the woman I had seen, the woman who was my wife, the woman I had been calling back for twenty long years. Not a word of woman in the poem, mind you, and it was all woman, my woman to me; everybody's woman to everybody—and that's why everybody likes it so. She was there, all through it, and I could see her, hear her, feel her near me—the woman who had run away with Joe Ellwood. I must have made a noise for Podner suddenly straightened, his startled eyes meeting mine; then his voice came out, frightened, husky:

"My God! The claim, the location! What is it? What—"

For all the locations, the developed mines in the Rockies, I wouldn't have told him; wouldn't have told him that the location was gone. But he must have read it on my face—the answer. He jumped up, his eyes glaring, his hands gripping tight on my shoulders as he swung my face to his eyes, reading me and what had happened. Suddenly his hands dropped at his sides and his spirit seemed to crumple up inside him.

"And it is—gone," he muttered to himself. "I left your claim and it is—gone." He looked up into my eyes, same way a doe once looked at me when I came up close to finish her. "Something drew me here to Red Mesa, Pete. I fought against it, struggled with it, but it drew me here. I couldn't stop, Pete. It was stronger than I—stronger—and it hauled me here." His eyes dropped, big tears in them, when he saw I didn't care; but when he looked up again, the tears were gone and his face was grim as granite.

"I'm going back, Pete," he said quietly. "If your location has been jumped, I'll get it back for you. I'm stronger now."

All the three miles I argued, pleaded with him, pointing out how nothing could

be done, as how this claim jumper could pot us as we came on him. But as I said before, women and men like Podner ain't reasonable. When we got in sight of the location, the tent the claim jumper had thrown, he made me stop.

"Stay here, Pete, until I call you. If the location is lost I'll get it back. You are strong and I am weak; the man could fight you and he can't fight me. Stay here until I call you."

Funny how he knew the reason he got things when I'd never been able to. He was weak, and strong men couldn't fight him so they just naturally had to like him. Stay? Of course I stayed. Podner had a way of getting what he wanted. I stayed there, my mind burning up with pictures of that black bearded pirate dancing on the little fellow's frame, my feet itching to get inside that tent. The breeze was getting a file-tip edge on it while I waited, then the claim jumper threw aside the fly of his tent and waved to me.

Don't know why, reckon it must have been the old pirate's manner, made me step soft as I looked inside. At one end of the tent was a table and on the table was a candle and beside the candle was Podner's poem. Podner was occupying the shakedown in the corner, one arm thrown across his chest, the holy sort of look on his face which I knew so well. His breath was coming and going, deep and strong as anyone's, his lips smiling gentle like.

The fellow who had stolen my claim put his fingers on his lips, tiptoeing to the shakedown and hauling the blanket higher on Podner's neck, then stepped to the table and took up the pad where Podner had written his poem.

"Reckon we'd better build a fire outside," he whispered to me. "The little feller's plumb wrastled hisself out, fightin' fer you.

"I've been making medicine with th' little feller," he said, after we'd built the fire outside and sat a long time in silence. "He's been beggin' me t' give back your location, tellin' me how it happened. Have you read it?" he asked, holding out the pad of paper with Podner's poem on it and waiting till I took it. "I ain't what you might call educated," he goes on embarrassed like. "Th' little feller read it out loud once—would you mind doin' it agin, stranger? I had a notion when I heard it that I can't seem to locate in my head."

I grinned, for I thought I knew what was pestering him, and read it over once more, finding more wonders in it, forgetting the man across the fire, seeing the woman clear. He reached out and took it away when I'd finished, spelling it out slowly, shaking his head as his dirty thumb travelled down the lines.

"Nary mention of her," he muttered, looking at me queer. "But stranger, there's a woman in this thing somewhere. It puts me in mind of a woman I married once. I run away with her. She was a dance-hall woman in Cripple's old days—"

He didn't make a move as I sprang to my feet, my hand jerking by instinct toward the left arm pit where I always stashed my gun. His face was looking into mine, a curious expression on it. And, in that second, I knew him for Joe Ellwood, the one I'd prayed to meet up with for twenty years.

"Sit down, Pete," he said quietly. "We'll wrastle it out. I banked your fires dirty, Pete, but it's tough t' love a woman."

"Where is she?" That was my one thought and it came quick.

He threw his big hands in a wide gesture that might have meant anything. It riled me bad for you don't hanker after a woman twenty years as I had, seeing her always before you, hearing her voice always close at hand, without

getting shaky when you meet the man who stole her away, especially when he makes gestures that might mean anything.

"Insinuating?" I asked, cold and deliberate.

"No—a gambler," he answered, sad-like. "He was runnin' the Green Light in Anaconda—Frenchman by name of 'Froggy' Poret, soft spoken and perlite sorta cuss. I hunted 'em years, Pete; hatin' 'em like pizen, till tonight. Reckon I never thought of her side; reckon we got on her nerves, Pete. We're tough old jaspers t' handle women—soft, you know, and kinda gentle." He went into a study of the flames, seeing there, I reckon, the same pictures the fires of twenty years had painted for me. He brushed his hand across his forehead. "Frenchman name of 'Froggy' Poret," he muttered; "soft spoken and perlite sorta cuss—the kind women take to. She was a woman, Pete, and women has diff'rent ways from men. She was unsteady, Pete, but I reckon it was a lot our fault."

"There's heaps worse ones," I answered back.

He hauled out his pipe and ,after filling her up, tosses the pouch across to me and then we smoked and studied the fire, the embers. Right over the tent where Podner slept, that long-wicked candle of a star was burning, and I felt my eyes moving away from the fire, watching it. I felt pretty good inside, somehow. Joe Ellwood was talking, slow, between puffs at his pipe.

"Pete, me and you picked a woman what naturally liked men who were soft spoken and sorta perlite. Because we wasn't them things she run away and we thought it was her fault—and the man's. Strikes me, we ought t' get along pretty fair, bein' as we're kinda alike. Shall we split this here mine three ways?" He was on his feet, walking round the fire to me, his hand out full length, palm up.

Twenty years of hate is some hate to throw away; twenty years of an idea is some idea. I got up, too, and looked at the hand of Joe Ellwood, then that blamed old candle star blazed in my eyes, hurting 'em and making 'em smart. Don't know how it happened but, when I tried to rub 'em, doggoned if my hand wasn't in the grip of that son-of-a-gun who'd robbed me twice. And the smart all went away as we looked at each other, grinning as we used to grin, twenty years back, in Cripple's old days.

When we'd sat down again, filling up our pipes and drawing steady, Joe jerked his thumb in the direction of the tent.

"Th' little feller's too forgetful for this country, Pete," he said. "We'd better stake him back till th' mine gets t'paying his dividends." He puffed away at his briar quite a while, then laughed. "What's wrong with Little Podner fer a handle t' th' mine?" he asks.

That's about all. Podner kicked at taking a third but it didn't do much good. Gold ain't everything but it's comfortable, and it's nice to have it turning out every minute. It got Podner well—I hear as how he's making a trip around the world. He had his hour and it was a big one, picture in all the papers, name on everybody's lips, actors reciting his poetry. But it ain't spoiled him a bit—not a mite.

Me and Joe each got his book, couple of years back, and right on the first page he'd written, "To my old pardner." They're lying on our desks in our Little Podner offices, right where everybody can see them. Think of his writing that to us—"To my old pardner!" He still calls me and Joe pardners—his pardners. Famous, too,—Podner is.

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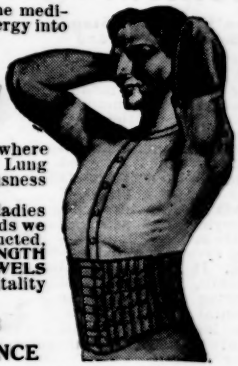

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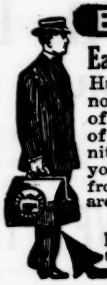

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